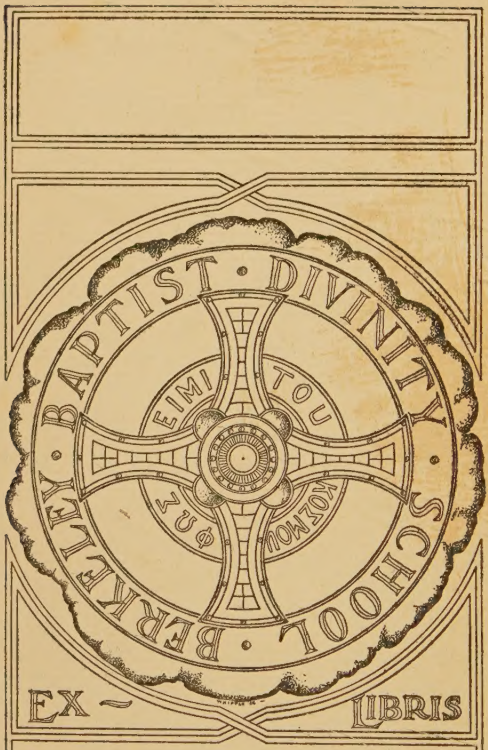

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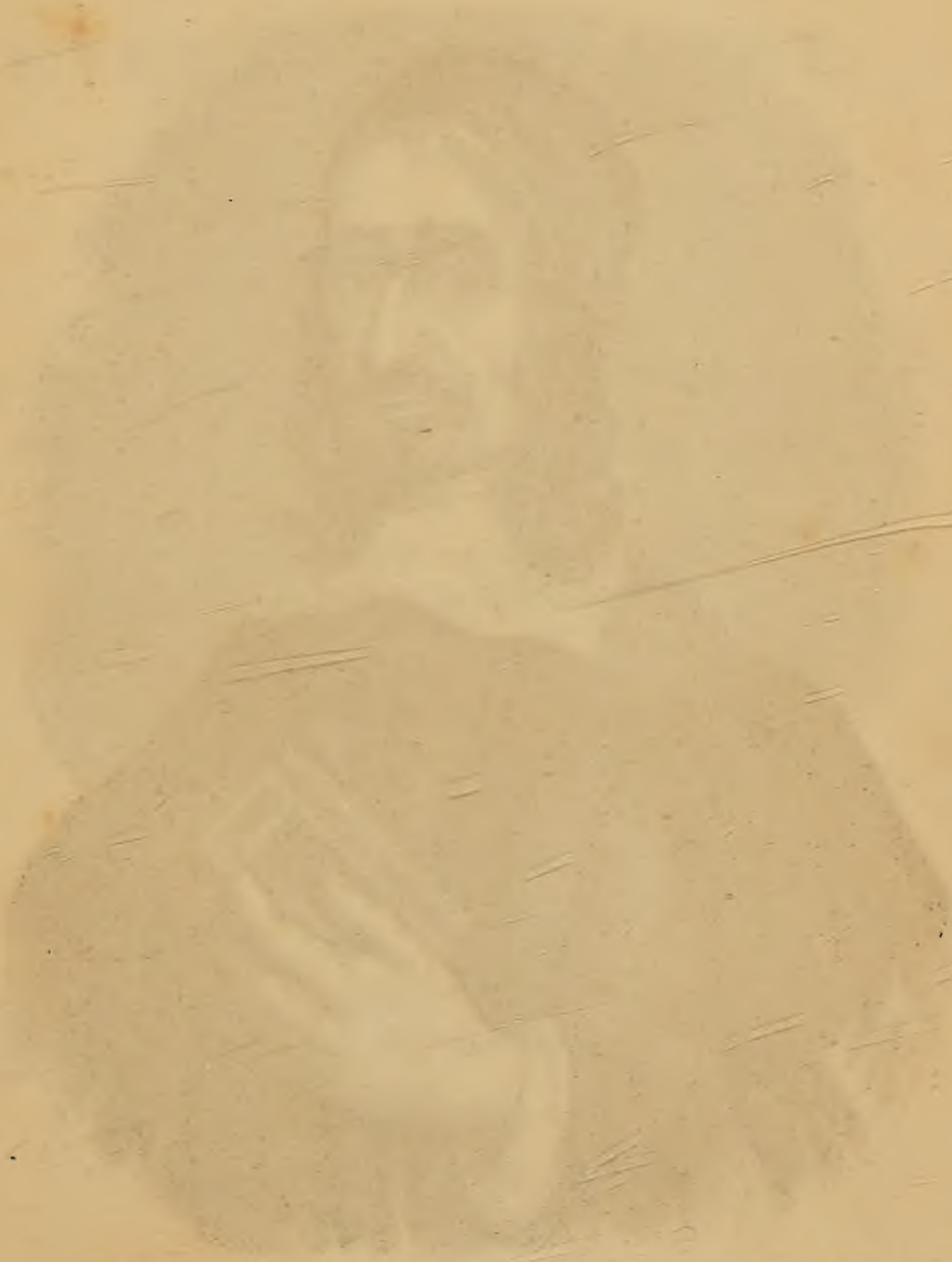

RICHARD BAXTER, A. M.

THE

SAINT'S

EVERLASTING REST,

OR

A TREATISE

OF THE BLESSED STATE OF THE SAINTS

IN

THEIR ENJOYMENT OF GOD IN HEAVEN.

QUATTHEOLOGICAL UNION
1962

BY RICHARD BAXTER.

ABRIDGED BY BENJAMIN FAWCETT.

I think it of great service to the souls of men, to call them to the notic and use of such a treatise as this; and to bring such old and excellent writings out of oblivion and the dust. HENRY. Preface to Scudder's *Christian's Daily Walk.*

STEREOTYPED BY J. CONNER.

PHILADELPHIA:

PUBLISHED BY LEARY & GETZ.

NO. 138 NORTH SECOND STREET.

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TO THE INHABITANTS

OF THE

BOROUGH AND FOREIGN OF KIDDERMINSTER,

BOTH MAGISTRATES AND PEOPLE.

My dear friends,

There are obvious reasons for prefixing your names to this book. It contains the substance of what was first preached in your parish church, and was first published from the press with a dedication to your worthy ancestors. Your trade and manufactures can never render your town so famous, as the name and writings of Mr. Baxter have already made it, both in this island, and in many remote parts of the Protestant world. His intimate and important relation to Kidderminster, and the years he abode in it, afforded him the most delightful reflection as long as he lived.

Long experience has enabled me to testify for you, that, notwithstanding your share in those common distinctions, which so unhappily divide fellow Protestants, you possess a most unusual degree of candour and friendship for each other. Thus you show, that Kidderminster has not totally lost the amiable spirit which it imbibed more than a century ago.

There are no excellencies, personal or relative, no species of domestic or public happiness, no beauties of civil or religious life, but what will be naturally promoted by a care to secure to ourselves an interest in the *rest which remaineth to the people of God*. They are the people for whom alone, that rest is designed, both by the promises of God, and by the purchase of the Son of God. A care to secure that rest to ourselves is *the one thing needful*. But neither this people, nor this care, you well know, are the peculiarities of any age, or of any party. If the inhabitants of Kidderminster formerly excelled in this care, you must allow, it was their greatest glory. And this, more than any improvements of trade or increasing elegancies o life, will be the greatest glory of their successors.

To excite this care is the noblest design of all religious instruction. This, and nothing else, animates the following pages. Here God and Christ, heaven and holiness, invite your

most attentive and affectionate regards. Here, you may peruse, what multitudes in the same town have heard and read before you to their everlasting joy, till *your blessings prevail above the blessings of your progenitors.* Here, by the help of divine grace, you may learn the heavenly art of walking with God below, of living in a constant view and foretaste of the glories of the New Jerusalem, and of making all you say or do, suffer or enjoy, subservient to the brightening your immortal crown. Nothing has the compiler of this abridgment to wish like such consequences as these; even, to see the same holy and heavenly conversation in himself, and in those around him, now, as Mr. Baxter saw in his day. This would be the greatest joy, and shall be the constant and fervent prayer, of

Your affectionate friend,

And obedient servant,

B FAWCETT.

PREFACE,

BY THE COMPILER OF THIS ABRIDGMENT.

Mr Richard Baxter, the author of the Saint's Rest, so well known to the world by this and many other excellent and useful writings, was a learned, laborious, and eminently holy divine of the last age. He was born near Shrewsbury in 1615, and died at London in 1691.

His ministry, in an unsettled state, was for many years employed with great and extensive success, both in London, and in several parts of the country; but he was no where fixed so long, or with such entire satisfaction to himself, and apparent advantage to others, as at Kidderminster. His abode there was indeed interrupted, partly by his bad health, but chiefly by the calamities of a civil war, yet in the whole it amounted to sixteen years; nor was it by any means the result of his own choice, or that of the inhabitants of Kidderminster, that he never settled there again, after his going from thence in 1660 Before his coming thither, the place was overrun with ignorance and profaneness; but, by a divine blessing on his wise and faithful cultivation, the fruits of righteousness sprung up in a rich abundance. He at first found but a single instance or two of daily family prayer in a whole street, and at his going away, but one family or two could be found in some streets that continued to neglect it. And on Lord's day, instead of the open profanation to which they had been so long accustomed, a person in passing through the town, in the intervals of public worship, might overhear hundreds of families engaged in singing psalms, reading the Scriptures and other good books, or such sermons as they had wrote down, while they heard them from the pulpit. His care of the souls committed to his charge, and the success of his labours among them, were truly remarkble; for the number of his stated communicants rose to six undred, of whom he himself declared, there were not twelv oncerning whose sincere piety he had not reason to entertain good hopes. Blessed be God, the religious spirit which was thus happily introduced, is yet to be traced in the town and neighbourhood in some degree: (O that it were in a greater!) and in proportion as that spirit remains, the name of Mr. Bax

tor continues in the most honourable and affectionate remembrance

As a writer, he has the approbation of some of his greatest cotemporaries, who best knew him, and were under no temptations to be partial in his favour. Dr. Barrow said, "His practical writings were never mended, and his controversial ones seldom confuted." With a view to his casuistical writings, the honourable Robert Boyle, Esq., declared, "He was the fittest man of the age for a casuist, because he feared no man's displeasure, nor hoped for any man's preferment." Bishop Wilkin observed of him, "that he had cultivated every subject he handled; that if he had lived in the primitive times, he would have been one of the fathers of the church; and that it was enough for one age to produce such a person as Mr. Baxter." Archbishop Usher had such high thoughts of him, that by his earnest importunity he put him upon writing several of his practical discourses, particularly that celebrated piece, his *Call to the Unconverted*. Dr. Manton, as he freely expressed it "thought Mr. Baxter came nearer the apostolical writings than any man in the age." And it is both as a preacher, and a writer, that Dr. Bates considers him, when, in his funeral sermon for him, he says, "In his sermons there was a rare union of arguments and motives, to convince the mind and gain the heart. All the fountains of reason and persuasion were open to his discerning eye. There was no resisting the force of his discourses, without denying reason and divine revelation. He had a marvellous facility and copiousness in speaking. There was a noble negligence in his style, for his great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words; he despised flashy oratory; but his expressions were clear and powerful, so convincing the understanding, so entering into the soul, so engaging the affections, that those were as deaf as adders, who were not charmed by so wise a charmer. He was animated with the Holy Spirit, and breathed celestial fire, to inspire heat and life into dead sinners, and to melt the obdurate in their frozen tombs. His books, for their number, [which it seems was more than one hundred and twenty,] and variety of matter in them, make a library. They contain a treasure of controversial, casuistical, and practical divinity. His books of practical divinity have been effectual for more numerous conversions of sinners to God, than any printed in our time; and while the church remains on earth, will be of continual efficacy to recover lost souls. There is a vigorous pulse in them, that keeps the reader awake and attentive." To these testimonies may not improperly be added that of the editors of his *practical works* in four folio volumes; in the preface to which, they

say, "Perhaps there are no writings among us that have more of a true Christian spirit, a greater mixture of judgment and affection, or a greater tendency to revive pure and undefiled religion; that have been more esteemed abroad, or more blessed at home, for the awakening the secure, instructing the ignorant, confirming the wavering, comforting the dejected, recovering the profane, or improving such as are truly serious, than the practical works of this author." Such were the apprehensions of eminent persons, who were well acquainted with Mr. Baxter and his writings. It is therefore the less remarkable that Mr. Addison, from an accidental and very imperfect acquaintance, but with his usual pleasantness and candour, should mention the following incident: "I once met with a page of Mr. Baxter. Upon the perusal of it, I conceived so good an idea of the author's piety, that I bought the whole book."

Whatever other causes might concur, it must chiefly be ascribed to Mr. Baxter's distinguished reputation as a preacher, and a writer, that presently after the restoration he was appointed one of the chaplains in ordinary to king Charles II, and preached once before him in that capacity; as also that he had an offer made him by the Lord Chancellor Clarendon, of the bishoprick of Hereford, which, in a respectful letter to his lordship, he saw proper to decline.

The Saint's Rest is deservedly esteemed one of the most valuable parts of his practical works. He wrote it when he was far from home, without any book to consult but his Bible, and in such an ill state of health, as to be in continual expectation of death for many months; and therefore, merely for his own use, he fixed his thoughts on this heavenly subject, "which (says he) hath more benefited me than all the studies of my life." At this time he could be little more than thirty years old. He afterward preached over the subject in his weekly lecture at Kidderminster, and in 1650 he published it; and indeed it appears to have been the first that he published of all his practical writings. Of this book Dr. Bates says, "It was written by him when languishing in the suspense of life and death, but has the signatures of his holy vigorous mind. To *allure our desires*, he unveils the sanctuary above, and discovers the glories and joys of the blessed in the divine presence, y a light so strong and lively, that all the glittering vanities f this world vanish in that comparison, and a sincere believer will despise them, as one of mature age does the toys and bau les of children. To *excite our fear*, he removes the screen, and makes the everlasting fire of hell so visible, and represents the tormenting passions of the damned in those dread ful colours, that, if duly considered, would check and con

trol the unbridled licentious appetites of the most sensual wretches."

Heavenly rest is a subject, in its own nature so universally important and interesting, and at the same time so truly engaging and delightful, as sufficiently accounts for the great acceptance which this book has met with; and partly also for the uncommon blessing which has attended Mr. Baxter's manner of treating the subject, both from the pulpit and the press For where are the operations of divine grace more reasonably to be expected, or where have they in fact been more frequently discerned, than in concurrence with the best adapted means. And should it appear, that persons of distinguishing judgment and piety, have expressly ascribed their first religious impressions to the hearing or reading the important sentiments contained in this book; or, after a long series of years, have found it both the counterpart, and the improvement, of their own divine life, will not this be thought a considerable recommendation of the book itself?

Among the instances of persons that dated their true conversion from hearing the sermons on the Saint's Rest, when Mr. Baxter first preached them, was the Rev. Mr. Thomas Doolittle, M. A., who was a native of Kidderminster, and at that time a scholar, about seventeen years old; whom Mr. Baxter himself afterwards sent to Pembroke hall in Cambridge, where he took his degree. Before his going to the university, he was upon trial as an attorney's clerk, and under that character, being ordered by his master to write something on a Lord's day, he obeyed with great reluctance, and the next day returned home, with an earnest desire that he might not apply himself to any thing as the employment of life, but serving Christ in the ministry of the gospel. His praise is yet in the churches, for his pious and useful labours, as a minister, a tutor, and a writer.

In the life of the Rev. Mr. John Janeway, fellow of King's college, Cambridge, who died in 1657, we are told, that his conversion was, in a great measure, occasioned by his reading several parts of the Saint's Rest. And in a letter which he afterwards wrote to a near relative, speaking with a more immediate reference to that part of the book which treats of *heavenly contemplation*, he says, "There is a duty, which, if it were exercised, would dispel all cause of melancholy; I mean heavenly meditation, and contemplation of the things which true Christian religion tends to. If we but walk closely with God one hour in a day in this duty, O what influence would it have upon the whole day besides, and, duly performed, upon the whole life! This duty, with its usefulness, manner, and

directions, I knew in some measure before, but had it more pressed upon me by Mr. Baxter's *Saint's Everlasting Rest*, a book that can scarce be over valued, for which I have cause for ever to bless God." This excellent young minister's life is worth reading, were it only to see how delightfully he was engaged in heavenly contemplation, according to the directions in the Saint's Rest.

It was the example of heavenly contemplation at the close of this book, which the Rev. Mr. Joseph Alleine, of Taunton, so frequently quoted in conversation, with this solemn introduction, "Most divinely says that man of God, holy Mr. Baxter."

Dr. Bates in his dedication of his funeral sermon for Mr. Baxter to Sir Henry Ashurst, Bart., tells that religious gentleman, and most distinguished friend and executor of Mr. Baxter, "He was most worthy of your highest esteem and love: for the first impressions of heaven upon your soul, were in reading his invaluable book of the *Saint's Everlasting Rest*."

In the life of the Rev. Mr. Matthew Henry, we have the following character given us of Robert Warburton, Esq., of Grange, the son of the eminently religious Judge Warburton, and the father of Mr. Matthew Henry's second wife. "He was a gentleman that greatly affected retirement and privacy, especially in the latter part of his life; the Bible and Mr. Baxter's *Saint's Everlasting Rest* used to lie daily before him on the table in his parlour; he spent the greatest part of his time in reading and prayer."

In the life of that honourable and most religious knight, Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston, we are told, "that he was constant in secret prayer and reading the Scriptures; afterwards he read other choice authors: but not long before his death he took singular delight to read Mr. Baxter's *Saint's Everlasting Rest*, and preparation thereunto; which was esteemed a gracious event of divine providence sending it as a guide to bring him more speedily and directly to that rest."

Besides persons of eminence, to whom this book has been precious and profitable, we have an instance, in the Rev. Mr. James Janeway's *Token for Children*, of a little boy, whose piety was so discovered and promoted by reading it, as the most delightful book to him next the Bible, that the thoughts of everlasting rest seemed, even while he continued in health, to swallow up all other thoughts; and he lived in a constant preparation for it, and looked more like one that was ripe for glory than an inhabitant of this lower world. And when he was in the sickness of which he died, before he was twelve years old, he said, "I pray, let me have Mr. Baxter's book that I may read a little more of eternity before I go into it."

Nor is it less observable, that Mr. Baxter himself, taking notice, in a paper found in his study after his death, what numbers of persons were converted by reading his *Call to the Unconverted*, accounts of which he had received by letter every week, expressly adds, "This little book (the *Call to the Unconverted*) God hath blessed with unexpected success beyond all that I have written, *except the Saint's Rest*." With an evident reference to this book, and even during the life of the author the pious Mr. Flavel affectionately says, "Mr. Baxter is almost in heaven; living in the daily views and cheerful expectation of *the Saint's Everlasting Rest with God;* and is left for a little while among us, as a great example of the life of faith." And Mr. Baxter himself says in his preface to his *Treatise of Self Denial*, "I must say, that of all the books which I have written, I peruse none so often for the use of my own soul in its daily work, as my *Life of Faith*, this of *Self Denial*, and the last part of the *Saint's Rest*." On the whole, it is not without good reason that Dr. Calamy remarks concerning it, "This is a book, for which multitudes will have cause to bless God for ever."

This excellent and useful book now appears in the form of an abridgment; and therefore, it is presumed, will be more likely, under a divine blessing, to diffuse its salutary influence among those that would otherwise have wanted opportunity or inclination to read over the larger volume. In reducing it to this smaller size, I have been very desirous to do justice to the author, and at the same time promote the pleasure and profit of the serious reader. And I hope, those ends are, in some measure, answered; chiefly by dropping things of a digressive controversial, or metaphysical nature; together with the prefaces, dedications, and various allusions to some peculiar circumstances of the last age; and particularly, by throwing several chapters into one, that the number of them may better correspond with the size of the volume; and sometimes by altering the form, but not the sense of a period, for the sake of brevity; and when an obsolete phrase occurred, changing it for one more common and intelligible. I should never have thought of attempting this work, if it had not been suggested and urged by others; and by some very respectable names, of whose learning, judgment, and piety, I forbear to avail myself. However defective this performance may appear, the labour of it (if it may be called a labour) has been, I bless God, one of the most delightful labours of my life.

Certainly the thoughts of *Everlasting Rest* may be as delightful to souls in the present day, as they have ever been to those of past generations. I am sure such thoughts are as

absolutely necessary now; nor are temptations to neglect them either fewer, or weaker now than formerly. The worth of everlasting rest is not felt, because it is not considered; it is forgotten, because a thousand trifles are preferred before it. But were the divine reasonings of this book duly attended to, (and O that the Spirit and grace of a Redeemer may make them so!) then an age of vanity would become serious; minds enervated by sensuality, would soon resume the strength of reason and display the excellency of Christianity; the delusive names of pleasure would be blotted out, by the glorious reality of heavenly joy upon earth; every station and relation in life would be filled up with the propriety and dignity of serious religion; every member of society would then effectually contribute to the beauty and happiness of the whole; and every soul would be ready for life or death, for one world or another, in a well grounded and cheerful persuasion of having secured a title to that *rest which remaineth to the people of God.*

B. F

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THE SAINT'S

EVERLASTING REST.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God, Hebrews iv, 9

CHAPTER I.

The introduction to the work, with some account of the nature of the Saint's Rest.

The important design of the apostle in the text, to which the author earnestly bespeaks the attention of the reader. 2. The saint's rest defined, with a general plan of the work. 3. What this rest presupposes. 4. The author's humble sense of his inability fully to show what this rest contains. 5. It contains, A ceasing from means of grace; 6. A perfect freedom from all evils; 7. The highest degree of the saint's personal perfections, both in body and soul; 8. The nearest enjoyment of God the chief good; 9–14. A sweet and constant action of all the powers of soul and body in this enjoyment of God; as, for instance, bodily senses, knowledge, memory, love, joy, together with a mutual love and joy. 15. The author's humble reflection on the deficiency of this account.

1. It was not only our interest in God, and actual enjoyment of him, which was lost in Adam's fall, but all spiritual knowledge of him, and true disposition towards such a felicity. When the Son of God comes with recovering grace, and discoveries of a spiritual and eternal happiness and glory, he finds not faith in man to believe it. As the poor man, that would not believe any one had such a sum as a hundred pounds, it was so far above what himself possessed: so men will hardly now believe there is such a happiness as once they had, much less as Christ hath now procured. When God would give the Israelites his sabbaths of rest, in a land of rest, he had more ado to make them believe it, than to overcome their enemies, and procure it for them. And when

they had it, only as a small intimation and earnest of an incomparably more glorious rest through Christ, they yet believe no more than they possess, but say, with the glutton at the feast, "Sure there is no other heaven but this!" Or, if they expect more by the Messiah, it is only the increase of their earthly felicity. The apostle bestows most of this epistle against this distemper, and clearly and largely proves, that the end of all ceremonie and shadows, is to direct them to Jesus Christ the sub stance; and that the rest of sabbaths, and Canaan, should teach them to look for a farther rest, which indeed is their happiness. My text is his conclusion after divers arguments; a conclusion, which contains the ground of all the believer's comfort, the end of all his duty and sufferings, the life and sum of all gospel promises and Chris tian privileges. What more welcome to men, under per sonal afflictions, tiring duties, successions of sufferings, than rest? It is not our comfort only, but our stability. Our l'veliness in all duties, our enduring tribulation, our honouring of God, the vigour of our love, thankfulness, and all our graces; yea, the very being of our religion and Christianity, depend on the believing serious thoughts of our rest. And now, reader, whatever thou art, young or old, rich or poor, I entreat thee, and charge thee, in the name of thy Lord, who will shortly call thee to a reckoning, and judge thee to thy everlasting unchangeable state, that thou give not these things the reading only, and so dismiss them with a bare approbation; but that thou set upon this work, and take God in Christ for thy only rest, and fix thy heart upon him above all. May the living God, who is the portion and rest of his saints, make these our carnal minds so spiritual, and our earthly hearts so heavenly, that loving him, and delighting in him may be the work of our lives; and that neither I that write, nor you that read this book, may ever be turned from this path of life; lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, we should come short of it, through our own unbelief or negligence, Heb. iv, 1.

2. The saint's rest is the most happy state of a Christian; or it is, the perfect endless enjoyment of God by the perfected saints, according to the measure of their

capacity, to which their souls arrive at death, and both soul and body most fully after the resurrection and final judgment. According to this definition of the saint's rest, a larger account of its nature will be given in this chapter; of its preparatives, chap. ii, its excellencies, chap. iii, and chap. iv, the persons for whom it is designed. Farther to illustrate the subject, some description will be given, chap. v, of their misery who lose this rest; and, chap. vi, who also lose the enjoyments of time, and suffer the torments of hell: next will be showed, chap. vii, the necessity of diligently seeking this rest; chap. viii, how our title to it may be discerned; chap. ix, that they who discern their title to it should help those that cannot; and, chap. x, that this rest is not to be expected on earth. It will then be proper to consider, chap. xi, the importance of a heavenly life upon earth; chap. xii, how to live a heavenly life upon earth; chap. xiii, the nature of heavenly contemplation, with the time, place and temper fittest for it; chap. xiv, what use heavenly contemplation makes of consideration, affections, soliloquy and prayer; and likewise, chap. xv, how heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects, and guarded against a treacherous heart. Heavenly contemplation will be exemplified, chap. xvi, and the whole work concluded.

3. There are some things necessarily presupposed in the nature of this rest; as, for instance, that mortal men are the persons seeking it. For angels and glorified spirits have it already, and the devils and damned are past hope.—That they choose God only for their end and happiness. He that takes any thing else for his happiness, is out of the way the first step.—That they are distant from this end. This is the woful case of all mankind since the fall. When Christ comes with regenerating grace, he finds no man sitting still, but all posting to eternal ruin, and making haste towards hell; till, by conviction, he first brings them to a stand, and then by conversion, turns their hearts and lives sincerely to him self.—This end, and its excellency, is supposed to be known, and seriously intended. An unknown good moves not to desire or endeavour. And not only a distance

from this rest, but the true knowledge of this distance, is also supposed. They that never yet knew they were without God, and in the way to hell, did never yet know the way to heaven. Can a man find he hath lost his God, and his soul, and not cry, "I am undone?" The reason why so few obtain this rest, is, they will not be convinced, that they are, in point of title, distant from it; and, in point of practice, contrary to it. Who ever sought for that, which he knew not he had lost? They that be whole need not a physician, but they that ar sick, Matt. ix, 12. The influence of a superior moving cause is also supposed; else we shall all stand still, and not move towards our rest. If God move us not we cannot move. It is a most necessary part of our Christian wisdom, to keep our subordination to God and depend ance on him. We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, 2 Cor. iii, 5. Without me, says Christ, ye can do nothing, John xv, 5. It is next supposed, that they who seek this rest, have an inward principle of spiritual life. God does not move men like stones, but he endows them with life, not to enable them to move without him, but in subordi nation to himself the first mover. And farther, this rest supposes such an actual tendency of soul towards it, as is regular and constant, earnest and laborious. He that hides his talent, shall receive the wages of a slothful servant. Christ is the door, the only way to this rest. But strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, Matt. vii, 13, and we must strive, if we will enter, for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, Luke xiii, 24, which implies, that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, Matt. xi, 12. Nor will it bring us to the end of the saints, if we begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh, Gal. iii, 3. He only that endureth to the end shall be saved, Matt. xxiv, 13. And never did a soul obtain rest with God, whose desire was not set upon him above all things else in the world. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also, Matt. vi, 21. The remainder of our old nature will much weaken and interrupt these desires, but never overcome them. And considering the opposition to our desires, from the contrary principles in our nature,

and from the weakness of our graces, together with our continued distance from the end, our tendency to that end must be laborious, and with all our might.—All these things are presupposed, in order to a Christian's obtaining an interest in heavenly rest.

4. Now we have ascended these steps into the outward court, may we look within the vail? May we show what this rest contains, as well as what it presupposes? Alas, how little know I of that glory! The glimpse which Paul had, contained what could not, or must not, be uttered. Had he spoken the things of heaven in the language of heaven, and none understood that language what the better? The Lord reveal to me what I may reveal to you! The Lord open some light, and show both you and me our inheritance! Not as to Balaam only, whose eyes were opened to see the goodliness of Jacob's tents, and Israel's tabernacles, where he had no portion, and from whence must come his own destruction! Not as to Moses, who had only a discovery, instead of possession, and saw the land which he never entered! But as the pearl was revealed to the merchant in the gospel, who rested not till he had sold all he had, and bought it! And as heaven was opened to blessed Stephen, which he was shortly to enter, and the glory showed him which should be his own possession!—The things contained in heavenly rest are such as these: a ceasing from means of grace; a perfect freedom from all evils; the highest degree of the saint's personal perfection, both of body and soul; the nearest enjoyment of God the chief good; and a sweet and constant action of all the powers of body and soul in this enjoyment of God.

5. One thing contained in heavenly rest is, the ceasing from means of grace. When we have obtained the haven, we have done sailing. When the workman receives his wages, it is implied he has done his work. When we are at our journey's end, we have done with the way. Whether prophecies, they shall fail; whether tongues, they shall cease; whether knowledge, it also, so far as it had the nature of means, shall vanish away. 1 Cor. xiii, 8. There shall be no more prayer, because no more necessity, but the full enjoyment of what we

prayed for: neither shall we need to fast and weep, and watch any more, being out of the reach of sin and temptations. Preaching is done; the ministry of man ceaseth; sacraments become useless; the labourers are called in, because the harvest is gathered, the tares are burned, and the work finished; the unregenerate past hope, and the saints past fear, for ever.

6. There is in heavenly rest a perfect freedom from all evils. All the evils that accompanied us through our course, and which necessarily follow our absence from the chief good: besides our freedom from those eternal flames, and restless miseries, which the neglecters of Christ and grace must remedilessly endure; a woful inheritance, which, both by birth and actual merit, was due to us, as well as to them! In heaven there is nothing that defileth, or is unclean: all *that* remains without, Rev. xxi, 27, xxii, 15. And doubtless there is not such a thing as grief and sorrow known there: nor is there such a thing as a pale face, a languid body, feeble joints, unable infancy, decrepit age, peccant humours, painful or pining sickness, griping fears, consuming cares, nor whatsoever deserves the name of evil. We did weep and lament, when the world did rejoice; but our sorrow is turned into joy, and our joy shall no man take from us, John xvi, 20, 22.

7. Another ingredient of this rest is, the highest degree of the saint's personal perfection, both of body and soul. Were the glory ever so great, and themselves not made capable of it, by a personal perfection suitable thereto, it would be little to them. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, 1 Cor. ii, 9. For the eye of flesh is not capable of seeing them, nor this ear of hearing them, nor this heart of understanding them: but there the eye and ear and heart are made capable; else how do they enjoy them? The more perfect the sight is, the more delightful the beautiful object. The more perfect the appetite the sweeter the food. The more musical the ear, the more pleasant the melody. The more perfect the soul, the more joyous those joys, and the more glorious to us is that glory.

8. The principal part of this rest, is our nearest enjoyment of God the chief good. And here, reader, wonder not if I be at a loss; and if my apprehensions receive but little of that which is in my expressions. If it did not appear to the beloved disciple what we shall be, but only in general, that when Christ shall appear we shall be like him, 1 John iii, 2, no wonder if I know little. When I know so little of God, I cannot much know what it is to enjoy him. If I know so little of spirits, how little of the Father of spirits, or the state of my own soul, when advanced to the enjoyment of him! I stand and look upon a heap of ants, and see them all with one view; they know not me, my being, nature, or thoughts, though I am their fellow creature; how little then must we know of the great Creator, though he with one view clearly beholds us all? A glimpse the saints behold as in a glass, 2 Cor. iii, 18, which makes us capable of some poor, dark apprehensions of what we shall behold in glory. If I should tell a worldling what the holiness and spiritual joys of the saints on earth are, he cannot know; for grace cannot be clearly known without grace; how much less could he conceive it, should I tell him of this glory? But to the saints I may be somewhat more encouraged to speak; for grace gives them a dark knowledge and slight taste of glory. If men and angels should study to speak the blessedness of that state in one word, what could they say beyond this, that it is the nearest enjoyment of God? O the full joys offered to a believer in that one sentence of Christ, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me," John xvii, 24. Every word full of life and joy. If the queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, "Happy are thy men, happy are thy servants, who stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom;" 1 Kings x, 8, then sure they that stand continually before God, and see his glory, and the glory of the Lamb, are more than happy. To them will Christ give to eat of the tree of life; and to eat of the hidden manna: yea, he will make them pillars in the temple of God, and they shall go no more out; and he

will write upon them the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from his God, and he will write upon them his new name; yea, more, if more may be, he will grant them to sit with him in his throne. These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore are they before the thron of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them: the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, Rev. ii, 7, 17, iii, 12, 21, vii, 14, 15, 17. O blind, deceived world! Can you show us such a glory? This is the city of our God, where the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. The glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. These sayings are faithful and true, and the things which must shortly be done, Rev. xxi, 3, 24, xxii, 3, 4, 6. And now we say, as Mephibosheth, let the world take all, forasmuch as our Lord will come in peace, 2 Sam. xix, 30. Rejoice therefore in the Lord, O ye righteous, and say with his servant David, the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance; the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, a thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore, Psalm xxxiii, 1, xvi, 5, 6, 8, 11. What presumption would it have been, once to have thought or spoken of such a thing, if God had not spoken it before us! I durst not

have thought of the saint's preferment in this life, as Scripture sets it forth, had it not been the express truth of God. How indecent to talk of being sons of God; speaking to him; having fellowship with him; dwelling in him and he in us, 1 John iii, 1; Gen. xviii, 27; 1 John i, 3, iv, 16, if this had not been God's own language! How much less durst we have once thought of shining forth as the sun; of being joint heirs with Christ; of judging the world; of sitting on Christ's throne; of being one in him and the Father, Matt. xiii, 43; Rom. viii, 17; 1 Cor. vi, 2; Rev. iii, 21; John xvii, 21, if we had not all this from the mouth, and under the hand of God! But hath he said, and shall he not do it! Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Numb. xxiii, 19. Yes, as the Lord God is true, thus shall it be done to the man whom Christ delighteth to honour, Est. vi, 11. Be of good cheer, Christian, the time is near, when God and thou shalt be near, and as near as thou canst well desire. Thou shalt dwell in his family. Is that enough? It is better to be a door keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness, Psalm lxxxiv, 10. Thou shalt ever stand before him, about his throne, in the room with him, in his presence chamber. Wouldst thou yet be nearer? Thou shalt be his child, and he thy Father; thou shalt be an heir of his kingdom; yea more, the spouse of his Son. And what more canst thou desire? Thou shalt be a member of the body of his Son; he shall be thy head; thou shalt be one with him, who is one with the Father, as he himself hath desired for thee of his Father, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me, John xvii, 21–23.

9. We must add, that this rest contains a sweet and constant action of all the powers of the soul and body in this enjoyment of God. It is not the rest of a stone, which ceaseth from all motion when it attains the centre. This body shall be so changed, that it shall no

more be flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but a spiritual body. We saw not that body that shall be, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body, 1 Cor. xv, 50, 44, 37, 38. If grace makes a Christian differ so much from what he was, as to say, "I am not the man I was;" how much more will glory make us differ? As much as a body spiritual, above the sun in glory, exceeds these frail, noisome, diseased lumps of flesh, so far shall our senses exceed those we now possess. Doubtless as God advanceth our senses, and enlargeth our capacity, so will he advance the happiness of those senses, and fill up with himself all that capacity. Certainly the body should not be raised up and continued, if it should not share in the glory. As it hath shared in the obedience and sufferings, so shall it also in the blessedness. As Christ bought the whole man, so shall the whole partake of the everlasting benefits of the purchase. O blessed employment of a glorified body! to stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, and to sound forth for ever, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests. Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." O Christians! this is the blessed rest; a rest, as it were, without rest; for they rest not day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come, Rev. iv, 11, v, 12, 9, 10, xix, 1, 6, iv, 8. And if the body shall be thus employed, O how shall the soul be taken up! As its powers and capacities are greatest, so its actions are strongest, and its enjoyments sweetest. As the bodily senses have their proper action, whereby they receive and enjoy their objects, so does the soul in its own action enjoy its own object, by knowing, remembering, loving, and delightful joying. This is the soul's enjoyment. By these eyes it sees, and by these arms it embraces.

10. Knowledge of itself is very desirable. As far as the rational soul exceeds the sensitive, so far the delights of a philosopher, in discovering the secrets of nature, and knowing the mystery of sciences, exceed the delights of the glutton, the drunkard, the unclean, and of all voluptuous sensualists whatsoever. So excellent is all truth. What then is their delight who know the God of truth? How noble a faculty of the soul is this understanding! It can compass the earth; it can measure the sun, moon, stars, and heaven; it can foreknow each eclipse to a minute, many years before. But this is the top of all its excellency, that it can know God, who is infinite, who made all these, a little here, and more, much more hereafter. O the wisdom and goodness of our blessed Lord! He hath created the understanding with a natural bias and inclination to truth, as its object; and to the prime truth, as its prime object. Christian, when after long gazing heavenward, thou hast got a glimpse of Christ, dost thou not sometimes seem to have been with Paul, in the third heaven, whether in the body, or out, and to have seen what is unutterable? 2 Cor. xii, 2–4. Art thou not, with Peter, ready to say, "Master, it is good to be here? Mark ix, 5. O that I might dwell in this mount! O that I might ever see what I now see!" Didst thou never look so long upon the Sun of righteousness, till thine eyes were dazzled with his astonishing glory? And did not the splendour of it make all things below seem black and dark to thee? Especially in thy day of suffering for Christ, when he usually appears most manifestly to his people, didst thou never see one walking in the midst of the fiery furnace with thee like the Son of God? Dan. iii, 25. Believe me, Christians, yea, believe God; you that have known most of God in Christ here, it is as nothing to what you shall know; it scarce, in comparison of that, deserves to be alled knowledge. For as these bodies, so that know edge must cease, that a more perfect may succeed. Knowledge shall vanish away. For we know in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a

child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known, 1 Cor. xiii, 8–12. Marvel not, therefore, Christian, how it can be life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ, John xvii, 3. To enjoy God and Christ, is eternal life, and the soul's enjoying is in knowing. They that savour only of earth, and consul with flesh, think it a poor happiness to know God. But we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness; and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life, 1 John v, 19, 20.

11. The memory will not be idle or useless, in this blessed work. From that height the saint can look behind him, and before him. And to compare past with present things, must needs raise in the blessed soul an inconceivable esteem and sense of its condition. To stand on that mount, whence we can see the wilderness and Canaan, both at once; to stand in heaven, and look back on earth, and weigh them together in the balance of a comparing sense and judgment, how must it needs transport the soul, and make it cry out, "Is this the purchase that cost so dear as the blood of Christ? No wonder. O blessed price! and thrice blessed love, that invented, and condescended! Is this the end of believing? Is this the end of the Spirit's workings? Have the gales of grace blown me into such a harbour? Is it hither that Christ hath allured my soul? O blessed way, and thrice blessed end! Is this the glory which the Scriptures spoke of, and ministers preached of so much? I see the gospel is indeed good tidings, even tidings of peace and good things, tidings of great joy to all nations! Is my mourning, my fasting, my sad humblings, my heavy walking come to this? Is my praying, watching, fearing to offend come to this? Are all my afflictions, Satan's temptations the world's scorn and jeers come to this? O vile nature that resisted so much, and so long such a blessing! Unworthy soul, is this the place thou camest so unwillingly

to? Was duty wearisome? Was the world too good to lose? Didst thou stick at leaving all, denying all, and suffering any thing for this? Wast thou loath to die to come to this? O false heart, thou hadst almost betrayed me to eternal flames, and lost me this glory? Art thou not now ashamed, my soul, that ever thou didst question that love which brought thee hither? That thou wast ealous of the faithfulness of thy Lord? That thou suspected his love, when thou shouldst only have suspected thyself? That ever thou didst quench a motion of his Spirit? And that thou shouldst misinterpret those providences, and repine at those ways which have such an end. Now thou art sufficiently convinced that thy Redeemer was saving thee, as well when he crossed thy desires as when he granted them; when he broke thy heart, as when he bound it up. No thanks to thee, unworthy self, for this received crown; but to Jehovah and the Lamb, be glory for ever."

12. But, O the full, the near, the sweet enjoyment, is that love. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him, 1 John iv, 16. Now the poor soul complains, "O that I could love Christ more!" Then, thou canst not choose but love him. Now thou knowest little of his amiableness, and therefore lovest little: then, thine eye will affect thy heart, and the continual viewing of that perfect beauty will keep thee in continual transports of love. Christians, doth it not now stir up your love, to remember all the experiences of his love? Doth not kindness melt you, and the sunshine of divine goodness warm your frozen hearts? What will it do then, when you shall live in love, and have all in him, who is all? Surely love is both work and wages. What a high favour, that God will give us leave to love him? That he will be embraced by those who have embraced lust and sin before him! But more than this, he returneth love for love; nay, a thousand times more. Christian, thou wilt be then brim full of love; yet, love as much as thou canst, thou shalt be ten thousand times more beloved. Were the arms of the Son of God open upon the cross, and an open passage made to his heart by the spear, and will not his arms

and heart be open to thee in glory? Did he begin to love before thou lovedst, and will not he continue now? Did he love thee, an enemy; thee, a sinner; thee, who even loathedst thyself; and own thee, when thou didst disclaim thyself? And will he not now immeasurably love thee, a son; thee, a perfect saint; thee who returnedst some love for love! He that in love wept over the old Jerusalem when near its ruin, with that love will he rejoice over the new Jerusalem in her glory! Christian believe this, and think on it; thou shalt be eternally embraced in the arms of that love, which was from everlasting, and will extend to everlasting; of that love which brought the Son of God's love from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory; that love, which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, pierced; which did fast, pray, teach, heal, weep, sweat, bleed, die: that love will eternally embrace thee. When perfect created love, and most perfect uncreated love, meet together, it will not be like Joseph and his brethren, who lay upon one another's necks weeping; it will be loving and rejoicing, not loving and sorrowing; yet it will make Satan's court ring with the news, that Joseph's brethren are come, that the saints are arrived safe at the bosom of Christ, out of the reach of hell for ever: nor is there any such love as David's and Jonathan's, breathing out its last into sad lamentations for a forced separation. Know this, believer, to thy everlasting comfort, if those arms have once embraced thee, neither sin, nor hell, can get thee thence for ever. Thou hast not to deal with an unconstant creature, but with him with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning, James i, 17. His love to thee will not be as thine was on earth to him; seldom, and cold, up and down. He that would not cease nor abate his love, for all thine enmity, unkind neglects, and churlish resistances, can he cease to love thee, when he hath made thee truly lovely? He that keepeth thee so constant in thy love to him, that thou canst challenge tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, to separate thy love from Christ, how much more will himself be constant, Rom. viii, 35. Indeed

thou mayst be persuaded, that neither death nor life nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, Rom. viii,38,39. And now are we not left in the apostle's admiration? What shall we say to these things? Rom. viii, 31. Infinite love must needs be a mystery to a finite capacity No wonder angels desire to look into this mystery, 1 Pet. i, 12. And if it be the study of saints here, to know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, Eph. iii, 18, 19, the saint's everlasting rest must consist in the enjoyment of God by love.

13. Nor hath joy the least share in this fruition. 'Tis that, which all the former lead to, and conclude in; even the inconceivable complacency which the blessed feel in their seeing, knowing, loving, and being beloved of God. This is the white stone which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it, Rev. ii, 17. Surely this is the joy which a stranger doth not intermeddle with, Prov. xiv, 10. All Christ's ways of mercy tend to, and end in, the saint's joys. He wept, sorrowed, suffered, that they might rejoice; he sendeth the Spirit to be their Comforter; he multiplies promises; he discovers their future happiness, that their joy may be full, John xvi, 24. He opens to them the fountains of living waters, that they may thirst no more, and that it may spring up in them to everlasting life, John iv, 10, 14. He chastens them, that he may give them rest, Psalm xciv, 12, 13. He makes it their duty to rejoice in him alway, and again commands them to rejoice, Phil. iv, 4. He never brings them into so low a condition, wherein he does not leave them more cause of joy than sorrow. And hath the Lord such a care of our comfort here? O what will that joy be, where the soul being perfectly prepared for joy, and joy prepared by Christ for the soul, it shall be our work, our business, eternally to rejoice! It seems the saint's joy shall be greater than the damned's torment; for their torment is the torment of creatures, prepared for the devil and his angels, Matt. xxv, 41, but our joy is the joy of our

Lord, Matt, xxv, 21. The same glory which the Father gave the Son, the Son hath given them, John xvii, 22, to sit with him in his throne, even as he is set down with his Father in his throne, Rev. iii, 21. Thou, poor soul, who prayest for joy, waitest for joy, complainest for want of joy, longest for joy; thou then shalt have full joy, as much as thou canst hold, and more than ever thou thoughtest on, or thy heart desired. In the mean time walk carefully, watch constantly, and then let God measure out to thee thy times and degrees of joy. It may be he keeps them till thou hast more need. Thou hadst better lose thy comfort than thy safety. If thou shouldst die full of fears and sorrows, it will be but a moment, and they are all gone, and concluded in joy inconceivable. As the joy of the hypocrite, so the fears of the upright are but for a moment. God's anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning, Job xx, 5; Psalm xxx, 5. O blessed morning! Poor humble drooping soul, how would it fill thee with joy now, if a voice from heaven should tell thee of the love of God, the pardon of thy sins, and assure thee of thy part in these joys! What then will thy joy be, when thy actual possession shall convince thee of thy title, and thou shalt be in heaven before thou art well aware?

14. And it is not thy joy only; it is a mutual joy as well as a mutual love. Is there joy in heaven at thy conversion, and will there be none at thy glorification? Will not the angels welcome thee thither, and congratulate thy safe arrival? Yea, it is the joy of Jesus Christ; for now he hath the end of his undertaking, labour, suffering, dying, when we have our joys; when he is glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, 2 Thess. i, 10, when he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied, Isa. liii, 11. This is Christ's harvest, when he shall reap the fruit of his labours, and it will not repent him concerning his sufferings, but he will rejoice over his purchased inheritance, and his people will rejoice in him. Yea, the Father himself puts on joy too, in our joy. As we grieve his Spirit, Eph. iv, 30, and weary him with our iniquities, Isa. xliii, 24, so is

he rejoiced in our good. O how quickly does he now spy a returning prodigal, even afar off? How does he run and meet him? And with what compassion does he fall on his neck and kiss him, and put on him the best robe, and a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and kills the fatted calf to eat and be merry, Luke xv, 20–23. This is indeed a happy meeting; but nothing to the embracing and joy of that last and great meeting. Yea more; as God doth mutually love and joy, so he makes this *his* rest, as it is our rest. What an eternal sabbatism, when the work of redemption, sanctification, preservation, glorification, is all finished, and perfected for ever! The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing, Zeph. iii, 17. Well may we then rejoice in our God with joy, and rest in our love, and joy in him with singing.

15. Alas! my fearful heart scarce dares proceed. Methinks I hear the Almighty's voice saying to me, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Job xxxviii, 2. But pardon thy servant, O Lord. I have not pried into unrevealed things. I bewail that my apprehensions are so dull, my thoughts so mean, my affections so stupid, and my expressions so low, and unbeseeming such a glory. I have only heard by the hearing of the ear: O let thy servant see thee, and possess these joys; and then shall I have more suitable conceptions, and shall give thee fuller glory; I shall abhor my present self, and disclaim and renounce all these imperfections. I have uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not, Job xlii, 3, 5, 6. Yet I believed and therefore have I spoken, 2 Cor. iv, 13. What, Lord, canst thou expect from dust, but levity? or from corruption, but defilement? Though the weakness and irreverence be the fruit of my own corruption, yet the fire is from thine altar, and the work of thy commanding. I looked not into thy ark, nor put forth my hand unto it, without thee. Wash away these stains also in the blood of the Lamb. Imperfect, or none, must be thy service here. O take thy Son's excuse, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak, Matt. xxvi, 41.

CHAPTER II.

The great preparatives to the saint's rest.

1. The happiness of Christians in having a way open into paradise. There are four things which principally prepare the way to enter into it; 2, 3, particularly, The glorious appearing of Christ; 4. The general resurrection: 5–8. The last judgment; 9, 10, and the saint' coronation: 11. Transition to the subject of the next chapter.

1. The passage of paradise is not now so blocked up as when the law and curse reigned. Wherefore finding, beloved Christians, a new and living way consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, the flesh of Christ, by which we may with boldness enter into the holiest, I shall draw near with fuller assurance, Heb. x, 19, 20, 22, and finding the flaming sword removed, shall look again into the paradise of our God: and because I know that this is no forbidden fruit, and withal that it is good for food, and pleasant to the spiritual eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one truly wise and happy; I shall, through the assistance of the Spirit, take and eat thereof myself, and give to you, according to my power, that you may eat. The porch of this temple is exceeding glorious, and the gate of it is called beautiful. Here are four things, as the four corners of this porch. Here is the most glorious coming and appearance of the Son of God: that great work of Jesus Christ in raising our bodies from the dust, and uniting them again to the soul: the public and solemn process at their judgment, where they shall first themselves be acquitted and justified, and then with Christ judge the world: together with their solemn coronation, and receiving the kingdom.

2. The most glorious coming and appearance of the Son of God may well be reckoned into his people's glory. For their sake he came into the world, suffered, died, rose, ascended, and for their sake it is that he will return. To this end will Christ come again to receive his people unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also, John xiv, 3. The bridegroom's departure was not upon divorce. He did not leave us with a purpose to return no more. He hath left pledges enough to as

sure us of the contrary. We have his word, his many promises, his sacraments, which show forth his death till he come, 1 Cor. xi, 26, and his Spirit, to direct, sanctify, and comfort till he return. We have frequent tokens of love from him, to show us he forgets not his promise, nor us. We daily behold the forerunners of his coming, foretold by himself. We see the fig tree putteth forth leaves, and therefore know that summer is nigh, Matt. xxiv, 32. Though the riotous world say, my Lord delayeth his coming, Matt. xxiv, 48, yet let the saints lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh, Luke xxi, 28. Alas, fellow Christians, what should we do if our Lord should not return? What a case are we here left in? What, leave us in the midst of wolves, Matt. x, 16, and among lions, Psalm lvii, 4, a generation of vipers, Matt. iii, 7, and here forget us? Did he buy us so dear, and then leave us sinning, suffering, groaning, dying daily, and will he come no more to us? It cannot be. This is like our unkind dealing with Christ, who when we feel ourselves warm in the world, care not for coming to him: but this is not like Christ's dealing with us. He that would come to suffer, will surely come to triumph. He that would come to purchase, will surely come to possess. Where else were all our hopes? What were become of our faith, our prayers, our tears, and our waiting? What were all the patience of the saints worth to them? Were we not left of all men most miserable? 1 Cor. xv, 19. Christians, hath Christ made us forsake all the world, and be forsaken of all the world; to hate all, and be hated of all; and all this for him, that we might have him, instead of all? And will he, think you, after all this, forget us, and forsake us himself? Far be such a thought from our hearts! But why staid he not with his people while he was here? Why? Was not the work on earth done? Must he not take possession of glory in our behalf? Must he not intercede with the Father, plead his sufferings, be filled with the Spirit to send forth, receive authority, and subdue his enemies? Our abode here is short. If he had staid on earth, what would it have been to enjoy him for a few days, and then die? He hath more in heaven to dwell among; even the

spirits of many generations. He will have us live by faith, and not by sight.

3. O fellow Christians, what a day will that be when we, who have been kept prisoners by sin, by sinners, by the grave, shall be fetched out by the Lord himself? It will not be such a coming as his first was, in poverty and contempt, to be spit upon, and buffeted, and crucified again. He will not come, O careless world! to be slighted and neglected by you any more. Yet that coming wanted not its glory. If the heavenly host, for the celebration of his nativity, must praise God, Luke ii, 13, 14, with what shoutings will angels and saints at that day proclaim glory to God, peace and good will towards men? If a star must lead men from remote parts of the world to come to worship a child in a manger, Matt. ii, 2, how will the glory of his next appearing constrain all the world to acknowledge his sovereignty? If, riding on an ass, he entered Jerusalem with hosannas, Matt. xxi, 5–9, with what peace and glory will he come towards the New Jerusalem? If, when he was in the form of a servant, Phil. ii, 7, they cry out, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him? Matt. viii, 27, what will they say, when they shall see him coming in his glory, and the heavens and the earth obey him? Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, Matt. xxiv, 30. To think and speak of that day with horror, doth well beseem the impenitent sinner, but ill the believing saint. Shall the wicked behold him and cry, "Yonder is he whose blood we neglected, whose grace we resisted, whose councils we refused, whose government we cast off!" And shall not the saints, with inconceivable gladness, cry, "Yonder is he whose blood redeemed us, whose Spirit cleansed us, whose law did govern us, in whom we trusted, and he hath not deceived our trust; for whom we long waited, and now we see we have not waited in vain! O cursed corruption that would have had us turn to the world, and present things, and say, Why should we wait for the Lord any longer? 2 Kings vi, 33. Now we see, blessed are all they that wait for him," Isa. xxx, 18. And now, Christians should we not put up that petition heartily, Thy king

dom come? The Spirit and bride say Come: and let him that heareth, and readeth, say Come. Our Lord himself says, Surely I come quickly. Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus, Rev. xxii, 17, 20.

4. Another thing that leads to paradise is, that great work of Jesus Christ, in raising our bodies from the dust, and uniting them again unto the soul. A wonderful effect of infinite power and love! Yea, wonderful indeed, says unbelief, if it be true. What, shall all these scattered bones and dust become a man? Let me with reverence plead for God, for that power whereby I hope to arise. What beareth the massy body of the earth? What limits the vast ocean of the waters? Whence is that constant ebbing and flowing of the tides? How many times bigger than all the earth is the sun, that glorious body of light? is it not as easy to raise the dead, as to make heaven and earth, and all of nothing? Look not on the dead bones, and dust, and difficulty, but at the promise. Contentedly commit these carcasses to a prison, that shall not long contain them. Let us lie down in peace and take our rest; it will not be an everlasting night, nor endless sleep. If unclothing be the thing thou fearest; it is that thou may have better clothing, 2 Cor. v, 4. If to be turned out of doors be the thing thou fearest; remember, that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, thou hast a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, 2 Cor. v, 1. Lay down cheerfully this lump of corruption; thou shalt undoubtedly receive it again in incorruption. Lay down freely this terrestrial, this natural body; thou shalt receive it again a celestial, a spiritual body. Though thou lay it down with great dishonour, thou shalt receive it in glory. Though thou art separated from it through weakness; it shall be raised again in mighty power. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed, 1 Cor. xv, 42–44, 52. The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then they who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, 1 Thess. iv, 16, 17. Triumph now, O

Christian, in these promises; thou shalt shortly triumph in their performance. This is the day which the Lord will make, we shall rejoice and be glad in it, Psalm cxviii, 24. The grave, that could not keep our Lord, cannot keep us. He arose for us, and by the same power will cause us to arise. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him, 1 Thess. iv, 14. Let us never look at the grave, but let us see the resurrection beyond it. Yea, let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know our labour is not in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv, 58.

5. Part of this prologue to the saint's rest, is the public and solemn process at their judgment, where they shall first themselves be acquitted and justified, and then with Christ judge the world. Young and old, of all estates and nations, that ever were from the creation to that day, must here come, and receive their doom. O terrible! O joyful day! Terrible to those that have forgot the coming of their Lord! Joyful to the saints, whose waiting and hope was to see this day! Then shall the world behold the goodness and severity of God; on them who perish, severity; but to his chosen, goodness, Rom. xi, 22. Every one must give an account of his stewardship, Luke xvi, 2. Every talent of time, health, wit, mercies, afflictions, means, warnings, must be reckoned for. The sins of youth, those which they had forgotten, and their secret sins, shall all be laid open before angels and men. They shall see the Lord Jesus, whom they neglected, whose word they disobeyed, whose ministers they abused, whose servants they hated, now sitting to judge them. Their own consciences shall cry out against them, and call to their remembrance all their misdoings. Which way will the wretched sinner look? Who can conceive the terrible thoughts of his heart? Now the world cannot help him; his old companions cannot; the saints neither can nor will. Only the Lord Jesus can but, there is the misery, he will not. Time was, sinner when Christ would, and you would not; now fain would you, and he will not. All in vain, to cry to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of

him that sitteth upon the throne, Rev. vi, 16, for thou hast the Lord of mountains and rocks for thine enemy, whose voice they will obey, and not thine. I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom, 2 Tim. iv, 1, that thou set thyself seriously to ponder on these things.

6. But why tremblest thou, O humble gracious soul? He that would not lose one Noah in a common deluge, nor overlook one Lot in Sodom; nay, that could do nothing till he went forth; will he forget thee at that day? The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished, 2 Pet. ii, 9. He knoweth how to make the same day the greatest terror to his foes, and yet the greatest joy to his people. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Shall the law? The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made them free from the law of sin and death. Or shall conscience? The Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God. It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? Rom. viii, 1, 2, 16, 33, 44. If our judge condemn us not, who shall? He that said to the adulterous woman, hath no man condemned thee? neither do I, John viii, 10, 11, will say to us, more faithfully than Peter to him, though all men deny thee, or condemn thee, I will not, Matt. xxvi, 33, 35. Having confessed me before men, thee will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven, Matt. x, 32.

7. What inexpressible joy, that our dear Lord, who loveth our souls, and whom our souls love, shall be our judge! Will a man fear to be judged by his dearest friend? Or a wife by her own husband? Christian, did Christ come down and suffer, and weep, and bleed, and lie for thee, and will he now condemn thee? Was he judged, condemned and executed in thy stead, and now, will he condemn thee himself? Hath he done most of the work already, in redeeming, regenerating, sanctifying, and preserving thee, and will he now undo all again?

Well then, let the terror of that day be never so great, surely our Lord can mean no ill to us in all. Let it make the devils tremble, and the wicked tremble; but it shall make us leap for joy. It must needs affect us deeply with the sense of our mercy and happiness to see the most of the world tremble with terror, while we triumph with joy; to hear them doomed to everlasting flames when we are proclaimed heirs of the kingdom; to see our neighbours that lived in the same towns, came to the same congregations, dwelt in the same houses, and were esteemed more honourable in the world than ourselves, now by the searcher of hearts eternally separated. This, with the great magnificence and dreadfulness of the day, the apostle pathetically expresses: it is a righteous thing with God, to recompense tribulation to them that troubl you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day, 2 Thess. i, 6–10.

8. Yet more, we shall be so far from the dread of that judgment, that ourselves shall become the judges. Christ will take his people, as it were, into commission with himself, and they shall set and approve his righteous judgment. Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? Nay, know ye not that we shall judge angels? 1 Cor. vi, 2, 3. Were it not for the word of Christ that speaks it, this advancement would seem incredible and the language arrogant. Even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied this, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him, Jude 14, 15. Thus shall the saints be honoured, and the upright shall have dominion in the morning, Psalm xlix, 14. O that

the careless world were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end, Deut. xxxii, 29. That they would be now of the same mind as they will be, when they shall see the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, burnt up! When all shall be in fire about their ears, and all earthly glory consumed. For the heavens and the earth, which are now, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, 2 Pet. iii, 7–12.

9. The last preparative to the saint's rest is their solemn coronation, and receiving the kingdom. For, as Christ their head, is anointed both king and priest, so under him are his people made unto God both kings and priests, to reign, and to offer praises for ever! Rev. v, 10. The crown of righteousness which was laid up for them, shall by the Lord the righteous Judge be given them at that day, 2 Tim. iv, 8. They have been faithful unto death, and therefore he will give them a crown of life, Rev. ii, 10. And according to the improvement of their talents here, so shall their rule and dignity be enlarged, Matt. xxv, 21, 23. They are not dignified with empty titles, but real dominion. Christ will grant them to sit with him in his throne, Rev. iii, 21, and will give them power over the nations, even as he received of his Father; and he will give them the morning star, Rev. ii, 26–28. The Lord himself will give them possession with those applauding expressions: Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the oy of thy Lord, Matt. xv, 23.

10. And with this solemn and blessed proclamation shall he enthrone them: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv, 34. Every word full of

life and joy. *Come;* this is the holding forth of the golden sceptre, to warrant our approach unto this glory. Come now as near as you will; fear not the Bethshemite's judgment; for the enmity is utterly abolished, Eph. ii, 15. This is not such a Come as we were wont to hear, Come take up your cross, and follow me, Matt. xvi, 24. Though that was sweet, yet this much more. *Ye blessed* blessed indeed, when that mouth shall so pronounce us For though the world hath accounted us accursed, and we have been ready to account ourselves so, yet certainly those that he blesseth, are blessed; and those whom he curseth, only are cursed, and his blessing cannot be reversed, Numb. xxii, 6, xxiii, 20. *Of my Father,* blessed in the Father's love, as well as the Son's, for they are one, John x, 30. The Father hath testified his love in their election, donation to Christ, sending of Christ, and accepting his ransom, as the Son hath also testified his. *Inherit;* no longer bondmen, nor servants only, nor children under age, who differ not in possession, but only in title from servants, Gal. iv, 1–7. But now we are heirs of the kingdom, James ii, 5, and joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii, 17. *The kingdom;* no less than the kingdom! Indeed to be King of kings, and Lord of lords, is our Lord's own proper title: but to be kings, and reign with him, Rev. xix, 16, xx, 6, is ours. The enjoyment of this kingdom is, as the light of the sun, each have the whole, and the rest never the less. *Prepared for you;* God is the Alpha as well as the Omega of our blessedness. Eternal love hath laid the foundation. He prepared the kingdom for us, and then prepared us for the kingdom. This is the preparation of his counsel and decree; for the execution whereof Christ was yet to make a farther preparation. *For you;* not for believers only in general, who without individual persons, are nobody; but for you personally. *From the foundations of the world;* not only from the promise after Adam's fall, but from eternity.

11. Thus we have seen the Christian safely landed in paradise, and conveyed honourably to his rest. Now le us a little farther, in the next chapter, view those mansions, consider their privileges, and see whether there be any glory like unto this glory.

CHAPTER III.

The excellencies of the saint's rest.

1. The excellencies of the saint's rest are enumerated. 2. It is the purchased possession. 3, 4. A free gift. 5. Peculiar to saints. 6. An association with saints and angels. 7. It derives its joys immediately from God himself. 8. It will be seasonable. 9. Suitable. 10–12. Perfect, without sin and suffering. 13. And everlasting. 14. The chapter concludes with a serious address to the reader.

1. Let us draw a little nearer, and see what farther excellencies this rest affordeth. The Lord hide us in the clefts of the rock, and cover us with the hands of indulgent grace, while we approach to take this view! This rest is excellent for being a purchased possession; a free gift, peculiar to saints; an association with saints and angels; yet deriving its joys immediately from God; and because it will be a seasonable, suitable, perfect, and eternal rest.

2. It is a most singular honour of the saint's rest, to be called the purchased possession, Eph. i, 14. That is, the fruit of the blood of the Son of God; yea, the chief fruit, the end and perfection of all the fruits and efficacy of that blood. Greater love than this there is not, to lay down the life of the lover. And to have this our Redeemer ever before our eyes, and the liveliest sense and freshest remembrance of that dying, bleeding love, still upon our souls: How will it fill our souls with perpetual joy, to think that in the streams of this blood we have swum through the violence of the world, the snares of Satan, the seducements of flesh, the curse of the law, the wrath of an offended God, the accusations of a guilty conscience, and the vexing doubts and fears of an unbelieving heart, and are arrived safe at the presence of God! *Now*, he cries to us, is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow! Lam. i, 12; and we scarce regard the mournful voice, nor scarce turn aside to view the wounds. But *then* our perfected souls will feel, and flame in love for love. With what astonishing apprehensions will redeemed saints everlastingly behold their blessed Redeemer!

the purchaser, and the price, together with the possession! Neither will the view of his wounds of love, renew our wounds of sorrow. He, whose first words after his resurrection were to a great sinner, Woman, why weepest thou! John xx, 15, knows how to raise love and joy, without any cloud of sorrow, or storm of tears If any thing we enjoy was purchased with the life of our dearest friend, how highly should we value it! If a dying friend deliver us but a token of his love, how carefully do we preserve it! And still remember him when we behold it, as if his own name were written on it! And will not then the death and blood of our Lord everlastingly sweeten our possessed glory? As we write down the price our goods cost us; so on our righteousness and glory, write down the price, the precious blood of Christ. His sufferings were to satisfy the justice that required blood, and to bear what was due to sinners, and so to restore them to the life they lost, and the happiness they fell from. The work of Christ's redemption so well pleased the Father, that he gave him power to advance his chosen, and give them the glory which was given to himself, and all this according to his good pleasure, and the counsel of his own will, Eph. i, 9, 11.

3. Another pearl in the saint's diadem, is, that it is a free gift. These two, purchased and free, are the chains of gold which make up the wreaths for the tops of the pillars in the temple of God, 1 Kings vii, 16. It was dear to Christ, but free to us. When Christ was to buy, silver and gold were nothing worth; prayers and tears could not suffice, nor any thing below his blood; but our buying is receiving; we have it freely, without money and without price, Isa. lv, 1. A thankful acceptance of a free acquittance, is no paying of the debt. Here all is free; if the Father freely give the Son, and the Son freely pay the debt; and if God freely accepts that way of payment, when he might have required it of the principal and if both Father and Son freely offer us the purchased life on our cordial acceptance, and if they freely send th Spirit to enable us to accept; what is here then that is not free? O the everlasting admiration that must needs surprise the saints to think of this freeness! "What did

the Lord see in me, that he should judge me meet for such a state? That I, who was but a poor, diseased, despised wretch, should be clad in the brightness of this glory! That I, a creeping worm, should be advanced to this high dignity! That I, who was but lately groaning, weeping, dying, should now be as full of joy as my heart can hold! yea, should be taken from the grave, where I was rotting, and from the dust and darkness, where I seemed forgotten, and be here set before his throne! That I should be taken, with Mordecai, from captivity, and be set next unto the king; and, with Daniel, from the den, to be made ruler of princes and provinces! Who can fathom unmeasurable love?" If worthiness were our condition for admittance, we might set down and weep with St. John, because no man was found worthy. But the Lion of the tribe of Judah is worthy, and hath prevailed, Rev. v, 4, 5, and by that title we must hold the inheritance. We shall offer there the offering that David refused, even praise for that which cost us nothing, 2 Sam. xxiv, 24. Here our commission runs, freely ye have received, freely give, Matt. x, 8, but Christ has dearly bought, yet freely gives.

4. If it were only for nothing, and without our merit, the wonder were great; but it is moreover against our merit, against our long endeavouring our own ruin. What an astonishing thought it will be, to think of the unmeasurable difference between our deservings and our receivings! Between the state we should have been in, and the state we are in! To look down upon hell, and see the vast difference that grace hath made betwixt us and them! To see the inheritance there, which we were born to, so different from that which we are adopted to! What pangs of love will it cause within us, to think, "Yonder was the place that sin would have brought me to, but this is it that Christ hath brought me to! Yonder death was the wages of my sin, but this eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord, Rom. vi, 23. Who made me to differ? 1 Cor. iv, 7. Had I not now been in those flames, if I had had my own way, and been let alone to my own will? Should I not have lingered in Sodom, till the flames had seized on me, if God had not

in mercy brought me out? Gen. xix, 16. Doubtless this will be our everlasting admiration, that so rich a crown should fit the head of so vile a sinner! That such high advancement, and such long unfruitfulness and unkindness, can be the state of the same person! And that such vile rebellions can conclude in such most precious joys! But no thanks to us, nor to any of our duties and labours, much less to our neglects and laziness: we know to whom the praise is due, and must be given for ever. Indeed to this very end it was that infinite wisdom cast the whole design of man's salvation into this mould of purchase and freeness, that the love and joy of man might be perfected, and the honour of grace most highly advanced; that the thought of merit might neither cloud the one, nor obstruct the other; and that on these two hinges the gate of heaven might turn. So then let DESERVED be written on the door of hell, but on the door of heaven and life, THE FREE GIFT.

5. This rest is peculiar to saints, belongs to no other of all the sons of men. If all Egypt had been light, the Israelites would not have had the less: but to enjoy that light alone, while their neighbours lived in thick darkness, must make them more sensible of their privilege. Distinguishing mercy affects more than any mercy. If Pharaoh had passed as safely as Israel, the Red sea would have been less remembered. If the rest of the world had not been drowned, and the rest of Sodom and Gomorrah not burned, the saving of Noah had been no wonder, nor Lot's deliverance so much talked of. When one is enlightened, and another left in darkness, one reformed, and another by his lust enslaved; it makes the saints cry out, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world! John xiv, 22. When the prophet is sent to one widow only of all that were in Israel, and to cleanse one Naaman of all the lepers, Luke iv, 25–27, the mercy is more observable. That will sure be a day of passionate sense on both sides, when there shall be two in one bed, and two in the field, the one taken, and the other left, Luke xvii, 34, 36. The saints shall look down upon the burning lake, and in the sense of their own happiness, and in the approba

tion of God's just proceedings, they shall rejoice and sing, Thou art righteous, O Lord, who wast, art, and shall be, because thou hast judged thus, Rev. xvi, 5.

6. But though this rest be proper to the saints, yet it is common to all the saints; for it is an association of blessed spirits, both saints and angels; a corporation of perfected saints, whereof Christ is the head; the communion of saints completed. As we have been together in the labour, duty, danger, and distress; so shall we be in the great recompense and deliverance. As we have been scorned and despised, so shall we be owned and honoured together. We, who have gone through the day of sadness, shall enjoy together that day of gladness. Those, who have been with us in persecution and prison, shall be with us also in that palace of consolation. How oft have our groans made, as it were, one sound; our tears one stream; and our desires one prayer! But now all our praises shall make up one melody; all our churches one church, and all ourselves one body; for we shall be all one in Christ, even as he and the Father are one, John xvii, 21. 'Tis true, we must be careful, not to look for that in the saints which is alone in Christ. But if the forethought of sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, Matt. viii, 11, may be our lawful joy; how much more the real sight and actual possession! It cannot choose but be comfortable to think of that day, when we shall join with Moses in his song, with David in his psalms of praise, and with all the redeemed in the song of the Lamb for ever, Rev. xv, 3, when we shall see Enoch walking with God, Gen. v, 24; Noah enjoying the end of his singularity; Joseph of his integrity; Job of his patience; Hezekiah of his uprightness; and all the saints the end of their faith, 1 Pet. i, 9. Not only our old acquaintance, but all the saints, of all ages, whose faces in the flesh we never saw, we shall there both know, and comfortably enjoy. Yea, angels as well as saints, will be our blessed acquaintance. Those, who now are willingly our ministering spirits, Heb. i, 14, will willingly then be our companions in joy. They, who had such joy in heaven for our conversion, Luke xv, 7, 10, will gladly rejoice with

us in our glorification. Then we shall truly say, as David, I am a companion of all them that fear thee, Psalm cxix, 63, when we are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly, and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Medi ator of the new covenant, Heb. xii, 22–24. 'Tis a singular excellence of heavenly rest, that we are fellow citizen with the saints, and of the household of God, Eph. ii, 19.

7. As another property of our rest, we shall derive its joys immediately from God. Now we have nothing at all immediately, but at the second or third hand, or how many who knows? From the earth, from man, from the sun and moon, from the ministration of angels, and from the Spirit, and Christ. Though in the hand of angels the stream savours not of the imperfection of sinners, yet it does of the imperfection of creatures; and as it comes from man, it savours of both. How quick and piercing is the word in itself! Heb. iv, 12. Yet many times it never enters, being managed by a feeble arm. What weight and worth is there in every passage of the blessed gospel! Enough, one would think, to enter and force the dullest soul, and wholly possess its thoughts and affections; and yet how oft does it fall as water upon a stone! The things of God, which we handle, are divine; but our manner of handling is human. There is little we touch, but we leave the print of our fingers behind. If God speak the word himself, it will be a piercing, melting word indeed. The Christian now knows by experience, that his most immediate joys are his sweetest joys; which have least of man, and are most directly from the Spirit. Christians, who are much in secret prayer and contemplation, are men of greatest life and joy; because they have all more immediately from God himself. Not that we should cast off hearing, reading and conference, or neglect any ordinance of God: but to live above them, while we use them, is the way of a Christian. There is joy in these remote receivings; but the fulness of joy is in God's immediate presence, Psalm

xvi, 11. We shall then have light without a candle, and perpetual day without the sun; for the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to thine in it, for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever, Rev. xxi, 23, xxii, 5. We shall then have enlightened understandings without Scripture, and be governed without a written law; for the Lord will perfect his law in our hearts, and we shall be all perfectly taught of God. We shall have joy, which we drew not from the promises, nor fetched home by faith or hope. We shall have communion without sacraments, without this fruit of the vine, when Christ shall drink it new with us in his Father's kingdom, Matt. xxvi, 29, and refresh us with the comforting wine of immediate enjoyment. To have necessities, but no suply, is the case of them in hell. To have necessity supplied by means of the creatures, is the case of us on earth. To have necessity supplied immediately from God, is the case of the saints in heaven. To have no necessity at all, is the prerogative of God himself.

8. A farther excellence of this rest is, that it will be seasonable. He that expects the fruit of his vineyard at the season, Mark xii, 2, and makes his people like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season, Psalm i, 3, will also give them the crown in season. He that will have a word of joy spoken in season, to him that is weary, Isa. l, 4, will surely cause the time of joy to appear in the fittest season. They who are not weary in well doing, shall, if they faint not, reap in due season, Gal. vi, 9. If God giveth rain even to his enemies both the former and the latter in his season, and reserveth the appointed weeks of harvest and covenants that there shall be day and night in heir season, Jer. v, 24, xxxiii, 20, then surely the glorious .arvest of the saints shall not miss its season. Doubtless .e that would not stay a day longer than his promise, out brought Israel out of Egypt on the self same day when the four hundred and thirty years were expired, Exod. xii, 40, 41; neither will he fail of one day or hour

of the fittest season for his people's glory. When we have had in this world a long night of darkness, will not the day breaking and the rising of the Sun of righteousness be then seasonable? When we have passed a long and tedious journey, through no small dangers, is not home then seasonable? When we have had a long and perilous war, and received many a wound, would not a peace with victory be seasonable? Men live in a continual weariness; especially the saints, who are most weary o that which the world cannot feel. Some weary of a blind mind; some of a hard heart; some, of their daily doubts and fears; some, of the want of spiritual joys; and some, of the sense of God's wrath. And when a poor Christian hath desired, and prayed, and waited for deliverance many years, is it not then seasonable? We grudge that we do not find a Canaan in the wilderness; or the songs of Sion in a strange land; that we have not a harbour in the main ocean, nor our rest in the heat of the day, nor heaven before we leave the earth; and would not all this be very unseasonable!

9. As this rest will be seasonable, so it will be suitable. The new nature of the saints doth suit their spirits to this rest. Indeed their holiness is nothing else but a spark taken from this element, and by the Spirit of Christ kindled in their hearts; the flame whereof, mindful of its own divine original, ever tends to the place from whence it comes. Temporal crowns and kingdoms could not make a rest for saints. As they were not redeemed with so low a price, 1 Pet. i, 18, neither are they endued with so low a nature. As God will have from them a spiritual worship, suited to his own spiritual being, he will provide them a spiritual rest, suitable to their spiritual nature. The knowledge of God and his Christ, a delightful complacency in that mutual love, an everlasting rejoicing in the enjoyment of our God, with a perpetual singing of his high praises; this is a heaven for a saint. Then we shall live in our own element. We are now as the fish in a vessel of water, only so much as will keep them alive, but what is that to the ocean? We have a little air let into us, to afford us breathing; but what is that to the sweet and fresh gales upon mount Sion?

We have a beam of the sun to lighten our darkness, and a warm ray to keep us from freezing; but then we shall live in its light, and be revived by its heat for ever. As the natures of saints are, such are their desires; and it is the desires of our renewed nature which this rest is suited to. Whilst our desires remain corrupted and misguided, it is a far greater mercy to deny them, yea, to destroy them, than to satisfy them: but those which are spiritual are of his own planting, and he will surely water them, and give the increase. He quickened our hunger and thirst for righteousness, that he might make us happy in a full satisfaction. Christian, this is a rest after thine own heart; it contains all that thy heart can wish; that which thou longest, prayest, labourest for, there thou shalt find it all. Thou hadst rather have God in Christ, than all the world: there thou shalt have him. What wouldst thou not give for assurance of his love? There thou shalt have assurance without suspicion. Desire what thou canst, and ask what thou wilt, as a Christian, and it shall be given thee, not only to half of the kingdom, but to the enjoyment both of kingdom and king. This is a life of desire and prayer, but that is a life of satisfaction and enjoyment. This rest is very suitable to the saint's necessities also, as well as to their natures and desires. It contains whatsoever they truly wanted; not supplying them with gross created comforts, which, like Saul's armour on David, are more burden than benefit. It was Christ and perfect holiness which they most needed, and with these shall they be supplied.

10. Still more, this rest will be absolutely perfect. We shall then have joy without sorrow, and rest without weariness. There is no mixture of corruption with our graces, nor of suffering with our comfort. There are none of those waves in that harbour, which now so toss us up and down. To-day we are well, to-morrow sick; to-day in esteem, to-morrow in disgrace; to-day we have friends, to-morrow none; nay we have wine and vinegar in the same cup. If revelations raise us to the third heaven, the messenger of Satan must presently buffet us, and the thorn in the flesh fetch us down, 2 Cor. xii, 2, 7. But there is none of this inconstancy in heaven. If per-

fect love casteth out fear, 1 John iv, 18, then perfect joy must needs cast out sorrow, and perfect happiness exclude all the relics of misery. We shall there rest from all the evil of sin, and of suffering.

11. Heaven excludes nothing more directly than sin, whether of nature, or of conversation. There shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, Rev. xxi, 27. What need Christ at all to have died, if heaven could ave contained imperfect souls? For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii, 8. His blood and Spirit have not done all this, to leave us after all defiled. What communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? 2 Cor. vi, 14, 15. Christian, if thou be once in heaven, thou shalt sin no more. Is not this glad news to thee, who hast prayed and watched against it so long? I know, if it were offered to thy choice, thou wouldst rather choose to be freed from sin, than have all the world. Thou shalt have thy desire. That hard heart, those vile thoughts, which accompanied thee to every duty, shall now be left behind for ever. Thy understanding shall never more be troubled with darkness. All dark Scriptures shall be made plain; all seeming contradictions reconciled. The poorest Christian is presently there a more perfect divine than any here. O that happy day, when error shall vanish for ever! When our understandings shall be filled with God himself, whose light will leave no darkness in us! His face shall be the Scripture, where we shall read the truth. Many a godly man hath here, in his mistaken zeal, been a means to deceive and pervert his brethren, and when he sees his own error, cannot again tell how to undeceive them. But there we shall conspire in one truth, as being one in him who is the truth. We shall also rest from all the sin of our will, affection and conversation. W shall no more retain this rebelling principle, which i still drawing us from God: no more be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their pre sence: no pride, passion, slothfulness, insensibility, shall enter with us; no strangeness to God, and the things of

God; no coldness of affections, nor imperfections in our love; no uneven walking, nor grieving of the Spirit; no scandalous action, nor unholy conversation; we shall rest from all these for ever. Then shall our will correspond to the divine will, as face answers face in a glass, and from which, as our law and rule, we shall never swerve. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his, Heb. iv, 10.

12. Our sufferings were but the consequences of our sinning, and in heaven they both shall cease together. We shall rest from all our doubts of God's love. It shall no more be said, that "doubts are like the thistle, a bad weed, but growing in good ground."* They shall now be weeded out, and trouble the gracious soul no more. We shall hear that kind of language no more, "What shall I do to know my state? How shall I know that God is my Father? that my heart is upright? that my conversion is true? that my faith is sincere? I am afraid my sins are unpardoned; that all that I do is hypocrisy; that God will reject me; that he does not hear my prayers." All this is there turned into praise. We shall rest from all sense of God's displeasure. Hell shall not be mixed with heaven. At times the gracious soul remembered God, and was troubled; complained, and was overwhelmed, and refused to be comforted; divine wrath lay hard upon him, and God afflicted him with all his waves, Psalm lxxvii, 2, 3, lxxxviii, 7. But that blessed day shall convince us, that though God hid his face from us for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on us, Isa. liv, 8. We shall rest from all the temptations of Satan. What grief is it to a Christian, though he yield not to the temptation, yet to be solicited to deny his Lord! What a torment, to have such horrid motions made to his soul! such blasphemous ideas presented to his imagination! Sometimes cruel thoughts of God, undervaluing thoughts of Christ, unbelieving thoughts of Scripture, or injurious thoughts of Providence! To be tempted sometimes to turn to present things, to play with the baits of sin, and venture on the

* Dr. John Preston.

delights of flesh, and sometimes to atheism itself! Especially, when we know the treachery of our own hearts, ready, as tinder, to take fire, as soon as one of these sparks shall fall upon them! Satan hath power here to tempt us in the wilderness, but he entereth not the holy city; he may set us on a pinnacle of the temple in the earthly Jerusalem, but the New Jerusalem he may not approach; he may take us up into an exceeding high mountain, but the mount Sion he cannot ascend; and if he could, all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, Matt. iv, 1, 5, 8, would be a despised bait to a soul possessed of the kingdom of our Lord. No, 'tis in vain for Satan to offer a temptation more. All our temptations from the world and the flesh shall also cease. O the hourly dangers that we here walk in! Every sense, and member, is a snare; every creature, every mercy, and every duty, is a snare to us. We can scarce open our eyes, but we are in danger of envying those above us, or despising those below us; of coveting the honours and riches of some, or beholding the rags and beggary of others with pride and unmercifulness. If we see beauty, 'tis a bait to lust; if deformity, to loathing and disdain. How soon do slanderous reports, vain jests, wanton speeches, creep into the heart! How constant and strong a watch do our appetites require! Have we comeliness and beauty? What fuel for pride! Are we deformed? What an occasion of repining! Have we strength of reason, and gifts of learning? O how prone to be puffed up, hunt after applause, and despise our brethren! Are we unlearned? How apt then to despise what we have not! Are we in places of authority? How strong is the temptation to abuse our trust, make our will our law, and to cut out all the enjoyments of others by the rules and model of our own interest and policy! Are we inferiors? How prone to grudge at others' pre-eminence, and bring their actions to the bar of judgment! Are we rich, and not too much exalted? Are we poor and not discontented? Are we not lazy in our duties, or make a Christ of them? Not that God hath made all these things our snares; but through our own corruption they become so to us. Ourselves are the greatest snare

to ourselves. This is our comfort, our rest will free us from all these. As Satan hath no entrance there, so neither any thing to serve his malice! but all things there shall join with us in the high praises of our great deliverer. As we rest from the temptations, we shall likewise from the abuses and persecutions of the world. The prayers of the souls under the altar will then be answered, and God will avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth, Rev. vi, 9, 10. This is the time for crowning with thorns; that for crowning with glory. Now, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution, 2 Tim. iii, 12, then, they that suffered with him, shall be glorified with him, Rom. viii, 17. Now, we must be hated of all men for Christ's name's sake, Matt. x, 22. Then, Christ will be admired in his saints that were thus hated, 2 Thess. i, 10. We are here made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men; as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, 1 Cor. iv, 9, 13; men separate us from their company, and reproach us, and cast out our names as evil, Luke vi, 22, but we shall then be as much gazed at for our glory, and they will be shut out of the church of the saints, and separated from us, whether they will or not. We can now scarce pray in our families, or sing praises to God, but our voice is a vexation to them: how must it torment them then, to see us praising and rejoicing, while they are howling and lamenting! You, brethren, who can now attempt no work of God, without losing the love of the world, consider, you shall have none in heaven but will further your work, and join heart and voice with you in your everlasting joy and praise. Till then, possess ye your souls in patience, Luke xxi, 19. Bind all reproaches as a crown to your heads. Esteem them greater riches than the world's treasures. It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you, who are troubled, rest with Christ, 2 Thess. i, 6, 7. We shall then rest from all our sad divisions, and unchristian quarrels with one another. How lovingly do thousands live together in heaven, who lived at variance upon earth! There is no contention, because none of this pride, ignorance, or

other corruption. There is no plotting to strengthen our party, nor deep designing against our brethren. If there be sorrow or shame in heaven, we shall then be both sorry and ashamed, to remember all this carriage on earth; as Joseph's brethren were to behold him, when they remembered their former unkind usage. Is it not enough that all the world is against us, but we must also be against one another? O happy days of persecution which drove us together in love, whom the sunshine o liberty and prosperity crumbles into dust by our conten tions! O happy day of the saint's rest in glory, when, as there is one God, one Christ, one Spirit, so we shall have one heart, one church, one employment for ever! We shall then rest from our participation of our brethren's sufferings. The church on earth is a mere hospital; some groaning under a dark understanding, some under an insensible heart, some languishing under unfruitful weakness, and some bleeding for miscarriages and wilfulness, some crying out of their poverty, some groaning under pains and infirmities, and some bewailing a whole catalogue of calamities. But a far greater grief it is, to see our dearest and most intimate friends turned aside from the truth of Christ, continuing their neglect of Christ and their souls, and nothing will awaken them out of their security: to look on an ungodly father or mother, brother or sister, wife or husband, child or friend, and think how certainly they shall be in hell for ever, if they die in their present unregenerate state: to think of the gospel departing, the glory taken from our Israel, poor souls left willingly dark and destitute, and blowing out the light that should guide them to salvation! Our day of rest will free us from all this, and the days of mourning shall be ended; then thy people, O Lord, shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of thy planting, the work of thy hands, that thou mayst be glorified, Isa. lx, 20, 21. Then we shall rest from all our own personal sufferings. Thi may seem a small thing to those that live in ease and prosperity; but to the daily afflicted soul, it makes the thoughts of heaven delightful. O the dying life we now live! as full of sufferings as (ays nd hours! Our

Redeemer leaves this measure of misery upon us, to make us know for what we are beholden, to mind us of what we should else forget, to be serviceable to his wise and gracious designs, and advantageous to our full and final recovery. Grief enters at every sense, seizes every part and power of flesh and spirit. What noble part is there, that suffereth its pain or ruin alone? But sin and flesh, dust and pain, will all be left behind together. O the blessed tranquillity of that region, where there is nothing but sweet, continued peace! O healthful place, where none are sick! O fortunate land, where all are kings! O holy assembly where all are priests! How free a state, where none are servants, but to their supreme Monarch! The poor man shall no more be tired with his labours: no more hunger or thirst, cold or nakedness: no pinching frosts or scorching heats. Our faces shall no more be pale or sad: no more breaches in friendship, nor parting of friends asunder: no more trouble accompanying our relations, nor voice of lamentation heard in our dwellings: God shall wipe away all our tears from our eyes, Rev. vii, 16, 17. O my soul, bear with the infirmities of thine earthly tabernacle; it will be thus but a little while; the sound of thy Redeemer's feet is even at the door. We shall also rest from all the toil of duties. The conscientious magistrate, parent, and minister, cry out, "O the burden that lieth upon me!" Every relation, state, age, hath variety of duties; so that every conscientious Christian cries out, "O the burden! O my weakness that makes it burthensome!" But our remaining rest will ease us of the burdens. Once more we shall rest from all these troublesome afflictions which necessarily accompany our absence from God. The trouble that is mixed in our desires and hopes, our longings and waitings, shall then cease. We shall no more look into our cabinet, and miss our treasure; into our hearts, and miss our Christ; no more seek him from ordinance to ordinance; but all be concluded in a most full and blessed enjoyment.

13. The last jewel of our crown is, that it will be an everlasting rest. Without this, all were comparatively nothing. The very thought of leaving it would imbitter all our joys. It would be a hell in heaven, to think of

once losing heaven; as it would be a kind of heaven to the damned had they but hopes of once escaping. Mortality is the disgrace of all sublunary delights. How it spoils our pleasure, to see it dying in our hands! But, O blessed eternity! where our lives are perplexed with no such thoughts, nor our joys interrupted with any such fears! where we shall be pillars in the temple of our God, and go no more out, Rev. iii, 12. While we were servants, we held by lease, and that but for the term of a transitory life; but the son abideth in the house forever, John viii, 35. "O my soul, let go thy dreams of present pleasures, and loose thy hold of earth and flesh. Study frequently, study thoroughly, this one word ETERNITY. What! live and never die! Rejoice, and ever rejoice!" O happy souls in hell, should you but escape after millions of ages! O miserable saints in heaven, should you be dispossessed, after the age of a million of worlds! This word, *everlasting*, contains the perfection of their torment, and our glory. O that the sinner would study this word, methinks it would startle him out of his dead sleep! O that the gracious soul would study it, methinks it should revive him in his deepest agony. "And must I, Lord, thus live for ever? Then will I also love for ever. Must my joys be immortal? And shall not my thanks be also immortal? Surely, if I shall never lose my glory, I will never cease thy praises. If thou wilt both perfect and perpetuate me and my glory, as I shall be thine and not my own, so shall my glory be thy glory. And as thy glory was thy ultimate end in my glory; so shall it also be my end, when thou hast crowned me with that glory which hath no end. Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever, 1 Tim. i, 17.

14. Thus I have endeavoured to show you a glimpse of approaching glory. But how short are my expressions of its excellency! Reader, if thou be an humble, sincere believer, and waitest with longing and labouring for this rest, thou wilt shortly see and feel the truth of all this. Thou wilt then have so high an apprehension of this blessed state, as will make thee pity the ignorance and distance of mortals, and will tell thee, all that is

here said falls short of the whole truth a thousand fold. In the mean time, let this much kindle thy desires, and quicken thy endeavours: up, and be doing, run, and strive, and fight, and hold on; for thou hast a certain, glorious prize before thee. God will not mock thee; do not mock thyself, nor betray thy soul by delaying, and all is thine own. What kind of men, dost thou think, would Christians be in their lives and duties, if they had still this glory fresh in their thoughts? What frame would their spirits be in, if their thoughts of heaven were lively and believing? Would their hearts be so heavy? their countenances be so sad? or would they have need to take up their comforts from below? Would they be so loath to suffer; so afraid to die; or would they not think every day a year till they enjoy it? May the Lord heal our carnal hearts, lest we enter not into the rest because of unbelief, Heb. iii, 19.

CHAPTER IV.

The Character of the Persons for whom this Rest is designed.

1. 'Tis wonderful that such rest should be designed for mortals. 2. The people of God, who shall enjoy this rest, are chosen from eternity. 3. Given to Christ. 4. Born again. 5–8. Deeply convinced of the evil of sin, their misery by sin, the vanity of the creature, and the all sufficiency of Christ. 9. Their will is proportionably changed. 10. They engage in covenant with Christ. 11. And they persevere in their engagements. 12. The reader invited to examine himself by these characteristics of God's people. 13. Farther testimony from Scripture that this rest shall be enjoyed by the people of God. 14. Also, that none but they shall enjoy it. 15, 16. And that it remains for them, and is not to be enjoyed till they come to another world. 17. The chapter concludes with showing, that their souls shall enjoy this rest while separated from their bodies.

1. While I was in the mount, describing the excellencies of the saint's rest, I felt it was good being there, and therefore tarried the longer; and was there not an extreme disproportion between my conceptions and the subject, much longer had I been. Can a prospect of that happy land be tedious? Having read of such a high and unspeakable glory, a stranger would wonder for what rare creature this mighty preparation should be

made, and expect some illustrious sun should break forth. But behold! only a shell full of dust, animated with an invisible, rational soul, and that rectified with as unseen a restored power of grace; and this is the creature that must possess such glory. You would think it must needs be some deserving piece, or one that brings a valuable price: but behold! one that hath nothing and can deserve nothing; yea, that deserves the contrary and would, if he might proceed in that deserving; bu being apprehended by love, he is brought to him that i all, Col. iii, 11, and most affectionately receiving him, and resting on him, he doth, in and through him, receive all this. More particularly, the persons for whom this rest is designed, are, chosen of God from eternity; given to Christ, as their Redeemer; born again; deeply convinced of the evil and misery of a sinful state, the vanity of the creature, and the all sufficiency of Christ; their will is renewed; they engage themselves to Christ in covenant; and they persevere in their engagements to the end.

2. The persons for whom this rest is designed, whom the text calls the people of God, are the chosen of God from eternity, Eph. i, 4, 5. That they are but a small part of mankind, is too apparent in Scripture and experience. They are the little flock, to whom it is their Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom, Luke xii, 32. Fewer they are than the world imagines; yet not so few as some drooping spirits think, who are suspicious that God is unwilling to be their God, when they know themselves willing to be his people.

3. These persons are given of God to his Son, to be by him redeemed from their lost state, and advanced to this glory. God hath given all things to his Son, but not as he hath given his chosen to him. God hath given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him, John xvii, 2. The difference is clearly expressed by the apostle; he hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Eph. i, 22. And though Christ is, in some sense, a ransom for all, 1 Tim. ii, 6, yet not in that special manner as for his people.

4. One great qualification of these persons is, that they are born again, John iii, 3. To be the people of God without regeneration, is as impossible as to be the children of men without generation. Seeing we are born God's enemies, we must be new born his sons, or else remain enemies still. The greatest reformation of life that can be attained to, without this new life wrought in the soul, may procure our farther delusion, but never our salvation.

5. This new life in the people of God discovers itself by conviction, or a deep sense of divine things. As for instance: they are convinced of the evil of sin. The sinner is made to know and feel, that the sin, which was his delight, is a more loathsome thing than a toad or serpent, and a greater evil than the plague or famine; being a breach of the righteous law of the most high God, dishonourable to him, and destructive to the sinner. Now the sinner no more hears the reproofs of sin, as words of course; but the mention of his sin speaks to his very heart, and yet he is contented you should show him the worst. He was wont to marvel, what made men keep such a stir against sin; what harm it was for a man to take a little forbidden pleasure; he saw no such heinousness in it, that Christ must needs die for it, and a Christless world be eternally tormented in hell. Now the case is altered, God hath opened his eyes to see the inexpressible vileness in sin.

6. They are convinced of their own misery by reason of sin. They, who before read the threats of God's law, as men do the story of foreign wars, now find it their own story, and perceive they read their own doom; as if they found their names written in the curse, or heard the law say, as Nathan, Thou art the man, 2 Sam. xii, 7. The wrath of God seemed to him before, but as a storm to a man in a dry house, or as the pains of the sick to the healthful stander by; but now he finds the disease is his own, and feels himself a condemned man, that he is dead and damned in point of law, and that nothing was wanting but mere execution to make him absolutely and irrecoverably miserable. This is a work of the Spirit, wrought in some measure in all the regenerate. How

should he come to Christ for pardon, that did not first find himself guilty and condemned? or for life, that never found himself spiritually dead? The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick, Luke v, 31. The discovery of the remedy, as soon as the misery, must needs prevent a great part of the trouble. And perhaps the joyful apprehensions of mercy may make the sense of misery sooner forgotten.

7. They are also convinced of the creature's vanity and insufficiency. Every man is naturally an idolater Our hearts turned from God in our first fall, and ever since the creature hath been our God. This is the grand sin of nature. Every unregenerate man ascribes to the creature divine prerogatives, and allows it the highest room in his soul; or if he is convinced of misery, he flies to it as his saviour. Indeed, God and his Christ shall be called Lord and Saviour; but the real expectation is from the creature, and the work of God is laid upon it. Pleasure, profit, and honour, are the natural man's trinity, and his carnal self is these in unity. It was our first sin to aspire to be as gods; and it is the greatest sin that is propagated in our nature from gene ration to generation. When God should guide us, we guide ourselves; when he should be our sovereign, we rule ourselves; the laws which he gives us we find fault with, and would correct; and if we had the making of them, we would have made them otherwise; when he should take care of us, (and must, or we perish,) we will care for ourselves; when we should depend on him in daily receivings, we had rather have our portion in our own hands; when we should submit to his providence, we usually quarrel at it, and think we could make a better disposal than God hath made. When we should study and love, trust and honour God, we study and love, trust and honour our carnal selves. Instead of God, we would have all men's eyes and dependence upon us, and all men's thanks returned to us, and would gladly be the only man on earth extolled and admired by all Thus we are naturally our own idols. But down fall this Dagon, when God does once renew the soul. It is the chief design of that great work, to bring the heart

back to God himself. He convinceth the sinner, that the creature can neither be his God, to make him happy, nor his Christ, to recover him from his misery, and restore him to God who is his happiness. God does this, not only by his word, but by providence also. This is the reason why affliction so frequently concurs in the work of conversion. Arguments which speak to the quick, will force a hearing, when the most powerful words are slighted. If a sinner made his credit his god, and God shall cast him into the lowest disgrace, or bring him, who idolized his riches, into a condition wherein they cannot help him; or cause them to take wing and fly away; what a help is here to this work of conviction! If a man made pleasure his god, whatsoever a roving eye, a curious ear, a greedy appetite, or a lustful heart could desire, and God should take these from him, or turn them into gall and wormwood; what a help is here to conviction! When God shall cast a man into a languishing sickness, and inflict wounds on his heart, and stir up against him his own conscience, and then, as it were, say to him, "Try if your credit, riches, or pleasures can help you. Can they heal your wounded conscience? Can they now support your tottering tabernacle? Can they keep your departing soul in your body? or save you from mine everlasting wrath? or redeem your soul from eternal flames? Cry aloud to them, and see now whether these will be to you instead of God and his Christ." O how this works now with the sinner! Sense acknowledges the truth, and even the flesh is convinced of the creature's vanity, and our very deceiver is undeceived.

8. The people of God are likewise convinced of the absolute necessity, the full sufficiency, and perfect excellency of Jesus Christ: as a man in famine is convinced of the necessity of food; or a man that had heard or read his sentence of condemnation, of the absolute necessity of pardon; or a man that lies in prison for debt, is convinced of his need of a surety to discharge it. Now the sinner feels an insupportable burden upon him, and sees there is none but Christ can take it off. He perceives the law proclaims him a rebel, and none but

Christ can make his peace. He is as a man pursued by a lion, that must perish, if he find not a present sanctuary. He is now brought to this dilemma; either he must have Christ to justify him, or be eternally condemned; have Christ to save him, or burn in hell for ever; have Christ to bring him to God, or be shut out of his presence everlastingly. And no wonder if he cry, as the martyr, "None but Christ, none but Christ." No gold, but bread, will satisfy the hungry; nor any thing but pardon will comfort the condemned. All things ar counted but dung now, that he may win Christ; and what was gain he counts loss for Christ, Phil. iii, 7, 8. As the sinner sees his misery, and the inability of himself, and all things to relieve him, so he perceives there is no saving mercy out of Christ. He sees, though the creature cannot, and himself cannot, yet Christ can. Though the fig leaves of our unrighteous righteousness are too short to cover our nakedness, yet the righteousness of Christ is large enough: ours is disproportionate to the justice of the law, but Christ's extends to every tittle. If he intercede, there is no denial; such is the dignity of his person and the value of his merits, that the Father grants all he desires. Before, the sinner knew Christ's excellency, as a blind man knows the light of the sun; but now, as one that beholds its glory.

9. After this deep conviction, the will discovers also its change. As for instance: the sin, which the understanding pronounces evil, the will turns from with abhorrence. Not that the sensitive appetite is changed, or any way made to abhor its object: but when it would prevail against reason, and carry us to sin against God, instead of Scripture being the rule, and reason the master, and sense the servant; this disorder and evil, the will abhors. The misery also which sin hath procured, is not only discerned, but bewailed. It is impossible that the soul should now look, either on its trespass against God, or yet on its own self procured calamity without some contrition. He that truly discerns that h hath killed Christ, and killed himself, will surely in som measure be pricked to the heart, Acts ii, 37. If he cannot weep, he can heartily groan; and his heart feels

what his understanding sees. The creature is renounced as vanity, and turned out of the heart with disdain. Not that it is undervalued, or the use of it disclaimed; but its idolatrous abuse, and its unjust usurpation. Can Christ be the way where the creature is the end? Can we seek to Christ to reconcile us to God, while in our hearts we prefer the creature before him? In the soul of every unregenerate man, the creature is both God and Christ. As turning from the creature to God and not by Christ, is no true turning; so believing in Christ, while the creature hath our hearts, is no true believing. Our aversion from sin, renouncing our idols, and our right receiving Christ, is all but one work, which God ever perfects where he begins. At the same time the will cleaves to God the Father, and to Christ. Having been convinced, that nothing else can be his happiness, the sinner now finds it is in God. Convinced also, that Christ alone is able and willing to make peace for him, he most affectionately accepts of Christ for Saviour and Lord. Paul's preaching was repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, Acts xx, 21. And life eternal consists first in knowing the only true God, and then Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, John xvii, 3. To take the Lord for our God, is the natural part of the covenant; the supernatural part is, to take Christ for our Redeemer. The former is first necessary, and implied in the latter. To accept Christ without affection and love, is not justifying faith. Nor does love follow as a fruit, but immediately concurs; for faith is the receiving of Christ with the whole soul. He that loveth father or mother more than Christ, is not worthy of him, Matt. x, 37, nor is justified by him. Faith accepts him for Saviour and Lord: for in both relations will he be received, or not at all. Faith not only acknowledges his sufferings, and accepts of pardon and glory; but acknowledges his sovereignty, and submits to his government and way of salvation.

10. As an essential part of the character of God's people, they now enter into a cordial covenant with Christ. The sinner was never strictly, nor comfortably, in covenant with Christ till now. He is sure, by the

free offers, that Christ consents; and now he cordially consents himself; and so the agreement is fully made. With this covenant Christ delivers up himself in all comfortable relations to the sinner; and the sinner delivers up himself, to be saved and ruled by Christ. Now the soul resolutely concludes, "I have been blindly led by flesh and lust, by the world and the devil, too long, almost to my utter destruction: I will now be wholly at he disposal of my Lord, who hath bought me with his lood, and will bring me to his glory."

11. I add, that the people of God persevere in this covenant to the end. Though the believer may commit sins, yet he never disclaims his Lord, renounces his allegiance, nor repents of his covenant; nor can he properly be said to break that covenant, while that faith continues, which is the condition of it. Indeed, those that have verbally covenanted, and not cordially, may tread under foot the blood of the covenant, as an unholy thing, wherewith they were sanctified, by separation from those without the church, Heb. x, 29; but the elect cannot be so deceived, Matt. xxiv, 24. Though this perseverance be certain to true believers, yet it is made a condition of their salvation; yea, of their continued life and fruitfulness, and of the continuance of their justification, though not of their first justification itself, John xv, 4, 6, 9, viii, 31; Rev. ii, 25, 26, iii, 11, 12; Col. i, 23; Rom. xi, 22. But eternally blessed be that hand of love, which hath drawn the free promise, and subscribed and sealed to that which ascertains us, both of the grace which is the condition, and the kingdom which on that condition is offered.

12. Such are the essentials of this people of God: not a full portraiture of them in all their excellencies, nor all the notes whereby they may be discerned. I beseech thee, reader, as thou hast the hope of a Christian, or the reason of a man, judge thyself, as one that must shortly be judged by a righteous God, and faithfully answer these questions. I will not inquire whether thou remember the time or the order of these workings of the Spirit there may be much uncertainty and mistake in that: if thou art sure they are wrought in thee, the matter is not

so great, though thou know not when or how thou camest by them. But carefully examine and inquire, hast thou been thoroughly convinced of a prevailing depravation through thy whole soul? and a prevailing wickedness through thy whole life? and how vile sin is? and that, by the covenant thou hast transgressed, the least sin deserves eternal death? Dost thou consent to the law, that it is true and righteous, and perceive thyself sentenced to this death by it? Hast thou seen the utter insufficiency of every creature, either to be itself thy happiness, or the means of removing this thy misery? Hast thou been convinced, that thy happiness is only in God, as the end; and in Christ, as the way to him? and that thou must be brought to God through Christ, or perish eternally? Hast thou seen an absolute necessity of thy enjoying Christ, and the full sufficiency in him, to do for thee whatsoever thy case requires? Hast thou discovered the excellency of this pearl, to be worth thy selling all to buy it? Matt. xiii, 46. Have thy convictions been like those of a man that thirsts; and not merely a change in opinion, produced by reading, or education? Have both thy sin and misery been the abhorrence and burden of thy soul? If thou couldst not weep, yet couldst thou heartily groan under the insupportable weight of both? Hast thou renounced all thy own righteousness? Hast thou turned thy idols out of thy heart, so that the creature hath no more the sovereignty, but is now a servant to God and Christ? Dost thou accept of Christ as thy only Saviour, and expect thy justification, recovery, and glory, from him alone? Are his laws the most powerful commanders of thy life and soul? Do they ordinarily prevail against the commands of the flesh, and against the greatest interest of thy credit, profit, pleasure, or life? Has Christ the highest room in thy heart and affections, that though thou canst not love him as thou wouldst, yet nothing else is loved so much? Hast thou to this end made a hearty covenant with him, and delivered up thyself to him? Is it thy utmost care and watchful endeavour, that thou mayst be found faithful in this covenant; and though thou fall into sin, yet wouldst not

renounce thy bargain, nor change thy Lord, nor give up thyself to any other government for all the world? If this be truly thy case, thou art one of the people of God in my text; and as sure as the promise of God is true, this blessed rest remains for thee. Only see thou abide in Christ, John xv, 4, and endure to the end, Matt. xxiv, 13; for if any man draw back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him, Heb. x, 38. But if no such work be found within thee; whatever thy deceived heart may think, or how strong soever thy false hopes may be thou wilt find to thy cost, except thorough conversion prevent it, that the rest of the saints belongs not to thee O that thou wert wise, that thou wouldst understand this, that thou wouldst consider thy latter end! Deut. xxxii, 29. That yet, while thy soul is in thy body, and a price in thy hand, Prov. xvii, 16, and opportunity and hope before thee, thine ears may be open, and thy heart yield to the persuasions of God, that so thou mightst rest among his people, and enjoy the inheritance of the saints in light, Col. i, 12.

13. That this rest shall be enjoyed by the people of God, is a truth which the Scripture, if its testimony be farther needed, clearly asserts in a variety of ways. As for instance: that they are foreordained to it, and it for them. God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city, Heb. xi, 16. They are styled vessels of mercy, afore prepared unto glory, Rom. ix, 23. In Christ they have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, Eph. i, 11. And whom he did predestinate, them he also glorified, Rom. viii, 30. Who can bereave his people of that rest which is designed for them by God's eternal purpose? Scripture tells us, they are redeemed to this rest. By the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest, Heb. x, 19; whether that entrance means by faith and prayer here, or by full possession hereafter. Therefore the saints in heaven sing a new song unto him who has redeemed them to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them kings and priests unto God

Rev. v, 8–10. Either Christ then must lose his blood and sufferings, and never see of the travail of his soul, or else there remaineth a rest to the people of God. In Scripture this rest is promised to them. As the firmament with stars, so are the sacred pages bespangled with these divine engagements. Christ says, Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, Luke xii, 32. I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, &c, &c, &c, Luke xxii, 29, 30. All the means of grace, the operations of the Spirit upon the soul, and gracious actings of the saints, every command to repent and believe, to fast and pray, to knock and seek, to strive and labour, to run and fight, prove that there remains a rest for the people of God. The Spirit would never kindle in us such strong desires after heaven, such love to Jesus Christ, if we should not receive what we desire and love. He that guides our feet into the way of peace, Luke i, 79, will undoubtedly bring us to the end of peace. How nearly is the means and end conjoined! The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Matt. xi, 12. They that follow Christ in the regeneration, shall sit upon thrones of glory, Matt. xix, 28. Scripture assures us, that the saints have the beginnings, foretastes, earnests, and seals of this rest here. The kingdom of God is within them, Luke xvii, 21. Though they have not seen Christ, yet loving him, and believing in him, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls, 1 Pet. i, 8, 9. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God, Rom. v, 2. And does God seal them with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance, and will he deny the full possession? Eph. i, 13, 14. The Scripture also mentions by name, those who hav entered into this rest. As Enoch, Abraham, Lazarus the thief that was crucified with Christ, &c. And if there be a rest for these, sure there is a rest for all believers. But it is vain to heap up Scripture proofs, seeing it is the very end of Scripture, to be a guide to lead us to this blessed state, and to be the charter and grant by which we hold all our title to it.

14. Scripture not only proves, that this rest remains for the people of God, but also that it remains for none but them; so that the rest of the world shall have no part in it. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii, 14. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him, John iii, 3, 36. No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God, Eph. v, 5 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God, Psalm ix, 17. They shall all be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Thess. ii, 12. The Lord Jesus shall come in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of our Lord, and from the glory of his power, 2 Thess. i, 7–9. Had the ungodly returned before their life was expired, and been heartily willing to accept of Christ for their Saviour and King, and to be saved by him in his way, and upon his most reasonable terms, they might have been saved. God freely offered them life, and they would not accept it. The pleasures of the flesh seemed more desirable to them than the glory of the saints. Satan offered them the one, and God offered them the other, and they had free liberty to choose which they would, and they chose the pleasures of sin for a season, before the everlasting rest with Christ. And is it not a righteous thing, that they should be denied that, which they would not accept? When God pressed them so earnestly, and persuaded them so importunately, to come in, and yet they would not, where should they be but among the dogs without? Though man be so wicked, that he will not yield till the mighty power of grace prevail with him, yet still we may truly say, that he may be saved, if he will, on God's terms. His inability, being moral, and lying in wilful wickedness, is no more excuse to him, than it is to an adulterer, that he cannot love his own wife, or to a malicious person, that he cannot but hate his own brother:

is he not so much the worse, and deserving of so much the sorer punishment? Sinners shall lay all the blame on their own wills in hell for ever. Hell is a rational torment by conscience, according to the nature of the rational subject. If sinners could but then say, it was long of God, and not of us, it would quit their consciences, and ease their torments, and make hell to them to be no hell. But to remember their wilfulness will feed the fire, and cause the worm of conscience never to die, Mark ix, 44.

15. It is the will of God, that this rest should yet remain for his people, and not be enjoyed till they come to another world. Who should dispose of the creatures, but he that made them? You may as well ask, why have we not spring and harvest without winter? or, why is the earth below, and the heavens above, as, why we have not rest on earth. All things must come to their perfection by degrees. The strongest man must first be a child. The greatest scholar must first begin in his alphabet. The tallest oak was once an acorn. This life is our infancy; and would we be perfect in the womb, or born at full stature? If our rest was here, most of God's providences must be useless. Should God lose the glory of his church's miraculous deliverances, and the fall of his enemies, that men may have their happiness here? If we were all happy, innocent, and perfect, what use was there for the glorious works of our sanctification, justification, and future salvation? If we wanted nothing, we should not depend on God so closely, nor call upon him so earnestly. How little should he hear from us, if we had what we would have! God would never have had such songs of praise from Moses at the Red Sea and in the wilderness, from Deborah and Hannah, from David and Hezekiah, if they had been the choosers of their own condition. Have not thy own highest praises to God, reader, been occasioned by thy dangers or miseries? The greatest glory and praise God has through the world is for redemption, reconciliation, and salvation by Christ; and was not man's misery the occasion of that? And where God loses the opportunity of exercising his mercies, man must needs lose the happiness of enjoying

them. Where God loses his praise, man will certainly lose his comforts. Oh the sweet comforts the saints have had in return to their prayers! How should we know what a tender hearted Father we have, if we had not, as the prodigal, been denied the husks of earthly pleasure and profit? We should never have felt Christ's tender heart, if we had not felt ourselves weary and heavy laden, hungry and thirsty, poor and contrite. It is a delight to a soldier, or traveller, to look back on his escapes when they are over; and for a saint in heaven to look back on his sins and sorrows upon earth, his fears and tears, his enemies and dangers, his wants and calamities, must make his joy more joyful. Therefore the blessed, in praising the Lamb, mention his redeeming them out of every nation and kindred and tongue; and so, out of their misery, and wants, and sins, and making them kings and priests to God. But if they had had nothing but content and rest on earth, what room would there have been for these rejoicings hereafter?

16. Besides, we are not capable of rest upon earth. Can a soul that is so weak in grace, so prone to sin, so nearly joined to such a neighbour as this flesh, have full content and rest in such a case? What is soul rest, but our freedom from sin, and imperfections, and enemies? And can the soul have rest that is pestered with all these, and that continually? Why do Christians so oft cry out in the language of Paul, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me? Rom. vii, 24. What makes them press towards the mark, and run that they may obtain, and strive to enter in, if they are capable of rest in their present condition? And our bodies are incapable, as well as our souls. They are not now those sun-like bodies which they shall be, when this corruptible hath put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality. They are our prisons, and our burdens; so full of infirmities and defects, that we are fain to spend most of our time in repairing them, and supplying their continual wants. Is it possible that an immortal soul should have rest in such a distempered, noisome habitation? Surely these sickly, weary, loathsome bodies must be refined, before they can be capable of enjoying rest. The objects we

here enjoy are insufficient to afford us rest. Alas! what is there in all the world to give us rest? They that have most of it, have the greatest burden. They that set most by it, and rejoice most in it, do all cry out at last of its vanity and vexation. Men promise themselves a heaven upon earth; but when they come to enjoy it, it flies from them. He that has any regard to the works of the Lord, may easily see that the very end of them is to take down our idols, to make us weary of the world, and seek our rest in him. Where does he cross us most, but where we promise ourselves most content? If you have a child you dote upon, it becomes your sorrow. If you have a friend you trust in, and judge unchangeable, he becomes your scourge. Is this a place or state of rest? And as the objects we here enjoy are insufficient for our rest, so God, who is sufficient, is here little enjoyed. It is not here that he hath prepared the presence chamber of his glory. He hath drawn the curtain between us and him: we are far from him as creatures, and farther as frail mortals, and farthest as sinners. We hear now and then a word of comfort from him, and receive his love tokens, to keep up our hearts and hopes; but this is not our full enjoyment. And can any soul, that hath made God his portion, as every one hath that shall be saved by him, find rest in so vast a distance from him, and so seldom and small enjoyment of him? Nor are we now capable of rest, as there is a worthiness must go before it. Christ will give the crown to none but the worthy. And are we fit for the crown, before we have overcome? Or for the prize, before we have run the race? Or to receive our penny, before we have wrought in the vineyard; or to be rulers of ten cities, before we have improved our ten talents? Or to enter into the joy of our Lord, before we have well done, as good and faithful servants? God will not alter the course of justice, to give you rest before you have laboured for the crown of glory, till you have overcome. There is reason enough why our rest should remain till the life to come. Take heed then, Christian reader, how thou darest to contrive and care for a rest on earth; or to murmur at God for thy trouble, and toil, and wants in the flesh. Doth thy poverty weary thee?

Thy sickness? Thy bitter enemies and unkind friends? It should be so here. Do the abominations of the times, the sins of professors, the hardening of the wicked, all weary thee? It must be so while thou art absent from thy rest. Do thy sins, and thy naughty, distempered heart weary thee? Be thus wearied more and more. But under all this weariness, art thou willing to go to God thy rest? And to have thy warfare accomplished and thy race and labour ended? If not, complain more of thy own heart, and get it more weary till rest seem more desirable.

17. I have but one thing more to add, for the close of this chapter, that the souls of believers do enjoy inconceivable blessedness and glory, even while they remain separated from their bodies. What can be more plain than those words of Paul? We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home, or rather sojourning, in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith, not by sight.) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord, 2 Cor. v, 6–8. Or those; I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better, Phil. i, 23. If Paul had not expected to enjoy Christ till the resurrection, why should he be in a strait, or desire to depart? Nay, should he not have been loath to depart upon the very same grounds? For while he was in the flesh, he enjoyed something of Christ. Plain enough is that of Christ to the thief: To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise, Luke xxiii, 43. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, it seems unlikely Christ would so evidently intimate and suppose the soul's happiness or misery presently after death, if there were no such matter, Luke xvi, 19–31. Our Lord's argument for the resurrection supposes, that God, being not the God of the dead, but of the living, Matt. xxii, 32, therefore Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were then living in the soul. If the blessedness of the dead that die in the Lord, Rev. xiv, 13, were only in resting in the grave, then a beast or a stone were as blessed nay, it were evidently a curse, and not a blessing. For was not life a great mercy? Was it not a greater mercy

to serve God and do good; to enjoy all the comforts of life, the fellowship of the saints, the comfort of ordinances, and much of Christ in all; than to lie rotting in the grave? Therefore some farther blessedness is there promised. How else is it said, We are come to the spirits of just men made perfect? Heb. xii, 22, 23. Sure, at the resurrection, the body will be made perfect as well as the spirit. Does not Scripture tell us, that Enoch and Elias are taken up already? And shall we think they possess that glory alone? Did not Peter, James, and John, see Moses also with Christ on the Mount? Yet the Scripture saith, Moses died. And is it likely that Christ deluded their senses in showing them Moses, if he should not partake of that glory till the resurrection? And is not that of Stephen as plain as we can desire? Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, Acts vii, 59. Surely, if the Lord receive it, it is neither asleep, nor dead, nor annihilated; but it is where he is, and beholds his glory. That of the wise man is of the same import: The spirit shall return unto God who gave it, Eccl. xii, 7. Why are we said to have eternal life; and that to know God is life, eternal life; and that a believer on the Son hath everlasting life? Or how is the kingdom of God within us? If there be as great an interruption of our life, as till the resurrection, this is no eternal life, nor everlasting kingdom. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are spoken of as suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7. And if the wicked already suffer eternal fire, then no doubt, but the godly enjoy eternal blessedness. When John saw his glorious revelations, he is said to be in the spirit, and to be carried away in the spirit. And when Paul was caught up to the third heaven, he knew not, whether in the body, or out of the body, Rev. i, 10, iv, 2; 2 Cor. xii, 2. This implies, that spirits are capable of these glorious things, without the help of their bodies. Is not so much implied when John says, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God? Rev. vi, 9. When Christ says, Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, Matt. x, 28, does it not plainly imply, that when wicked men have killed our bodies, that is, have separated the souls from

them, yet the souls are still alive? The soul of Christ was alive when his body was dead, and therefore so shall ours too. This appears by his words to the thief, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise; and also by his voice on the cross, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, Luke xxiii, 46. If the spirits of those that were disobedient in the days of Noah, were in prison, 1 Pet. iii 19, 20, that is, in a living and suffering state; then certainly the separate spirits of the just are in an opposite condition of happiness. Therefore, faithful souls shall no sooner leave their prisons of flesh, but angels will be their convoy; Christ, with all the perfected spirits of the just, will be their companions; heaven will be their residence, and God their happiness. When such die, they may boldly and believingly say, as Stephen, Lord Jesus receive my spirit; and commend it, as Christ did, into Father's hands.

CHAPTER V.

The misery of those who lose the saint's rest.

1. The reader, if unregenerate, urged to consider what the loss of heaven will be. 2. The loss of heaven particularly includes, 3. The personal perfection of the saints; 4. God Himself; 5. all delighful affections towards God; 6. the blessed society of angels and glorified spirits. 7. The aggravations of the loss of heaven. 8. The understanding of the ungodly will then be cleared; 9. also enlarged: 10. Their consciences will make a true and close application: 11. Their affections will be more lively: 12–18. Their memories will be large and strong. 19. Conclusion of the chapter.

1. If thou, reader, art a stranger to Christ, and to the holy nature and life of his people, who are before described, and shalt live and die in this condition, let me tell thee, thou shalt never partake of the joys of heaven, nor have the least taste of the saint's eternal rest. I may say, as Ehud to Eglon, I have a message to thee from God, Judges iii, 20, that as the word of God is true thou shalt never see the face of God with comfort. Thi sentence I am commanded to pass upon thee; take it a thou wilt, and escape it if thou canst. I know thy humble and hearty subjection to Christ would procure thy escape; he would then acknowledge thee for one of his

people, and give thee a portion in the inheritance of his chosen. If this might be the happy success of my message, I should be so far from repining, like Jonas, that the threatenings of God are not executed upon thee, that I should bless the day that ever God made me so happy a messenger. But if thou end thy days in thy unregenerate state, as sure as the heavens are over thy head, and the earth under thy feet, thou shalt be shut out of the rest of the saints, and receive thy portion in everlasting fire. I expect thou wilt turn upon me, and say, when did God show you the book of life, or tell you who they are that shall be saved, and who shut out? I answer, I do not name thee, nor any other; I only conclude it of the unregenerate in general, and of thee, if thou be such a one. Nor do I go about to determine who shall repent, and who shall not; much less, that thou shalt never repent. I had rather show thee what hopes thou hast before thee, if thou wilt not sit still, and lose them. I would far rather persuade thee to hearken in time, before the door is shut against thee, than tell thee there is no hope of thy repenting and returning. But if the foregoing description of the people of God does not agree with the state of thy soul, is it then a hard question, whether thou shalt ever be saved? Need I ascend up into heaven to know, that without holiness no man can see the Lord; or that only the pure in heart shall see God; or, that except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God? Need I go up to heaven to inquire that of Christ, which he came down to earth to tell us; and sent his Spirit in his apostles to tell us; and which he and they have left upon record to all the world? And though I know not the secrets of thy heart, and therefore cannot tell thee by name, whether it be thy state or not; yet if thou art but willing and diligent, thou mayst know thyself, whether thou art an heir of heaven or not. 'Tis the main thing I desire, that if thou art yet miserable, thou mayst discern and escape it. But how canst thou escape, if thou neglect Christ and salvation? 'Tis as impossible as for the devils themselves to be saved. Nay, God has more plainly and frequently spoken it in Scripture of such sinners as thou

art, than he has of the devils. Methinks a sight of thy case should strike thee with amazement and horror. When Belshazzar saw the fingers of a man's hand that wrote upon the wall, his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other, Dan. v, 5, 6: what trembling then should seize on thee, who hast the hand of God himself against thee, not in a sentence or two, but in the very scope of the Scriptures, threatening the loss of an everlasting kingdom! Because I would fain have thee lay it to heart, I will show thee the nature of thy loss of heaven, together with its aggravations.

2. In their loss of heaven the ungodly lose, the saint's personal perfection; God himself; all delightful affections towards God, and the blessed society of angels and saints.

3. The glorious personal perfection which the saints enjoy in heaven, is the great loss of the ungodly. They lose that shining lustre of the body surpassing the brightness of the sun at noon-day. Though the bodies of the wicked will be raised more spiritual than they were upon earth, yet that will only make them capable of the more exquisite torments. They would be glad then, if every member were a dead member, that it might not feel the punishment inflicted on it; and if the whole body were a rotten carcass, or might lie down again in the dust. Much more do they want that moral perfection which the blessed partake of; those holy dispositions of mind; that cheerful readiness to do the will of God; that perfect rectitude of all their actions. Instead of these, they have that perverseness of will, that loathing of good, that love to evil, that violence of passion, which they had on earth. 'Tis true, their understandings will be much cleared by the ceasing of former temptations, and experiencing the falsehood of former delusions. But they have the same dispositions still; and fain would they commit the same sins, if they could; they want but opportunity. There will be a greater difference between these wretches, and the glorified Christians, than there is betwixt a toad and the sun in the firmament. The

rich man's purple, and fine linen, and sumptuous fare, did not so exalt him above Lazarus, while at his gate, full of sores.

4. They shall have no comfortable relation to God, nor communion with him. As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge; but said unto him, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; so God will abhor to retain them in his household. He will never admit them to the inheritance of his saints, nor endure them to stand in his presence, but will profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity. They are ready now to lay as confident claim to Christ and heaven, as if they were sincere believing saints. The swearer, the drunkard, the whoremaster, the worldling, can say, Is not God our Father, as well as yours? But when Christ separates his followers from his foes, and his faithful friends from his deceived flatterers, where then will be their presumptuous claim? Then they shall find, that God is not their Father, because they would not be his people. As they would not consent that God by his Spirit should dwell in them, so the tabernacle of wickedness shall have no fellowship with him, nor the wicked inhabit the city of God. Only they that walked with God here, shall live and be happy with him in heaven. Little does the world know what a loss that soul hath, who loses God! What a dungeon would earth be, if it had lost the sun? What a loathsome carrion the body, if it had lost the soul? Yet all these are nothing to the loss of God. As the enjoyment of God is the heaven of the saints, so the loss of God is the hell of the ungodly. And as the enjoying of God is the enjoying of all, so the loss of God is the loss of all.

5. They also lose all delightful affections towards God. That transporting knowledge; those delightful views of his glorious face; the inconceivable pleasure of loving im; the apprehensions of his infinite love to us; the onstant joys of his saints, and the rivers of consolation with which he satisfies them. Is it nothing to lose all this? The employment of a king in ruling a kingdom, does not so far exceed that of the vilest slave, as this

heavenly employment exceeds that of an earthly king. God suits men's employments to their natures. Your hearts, sinners, were never set upon God in your lives, never warmed with his love, never longed after the enjoyment of him; you had no delight in speaking or hearing of him; you had rather have continued on earth, if you had known how, than be interested in the glorious praises of God. Is it meet then that you should b members of the celestial choir?

6. They shall be deprived of the blessed society of angels and glorified saints. Instead of being companions of those happy spirits, and numbered with those triumphant kings, they must be members of the corporation of hell, where they shall have companions of a far different nature and quality. Scorning and abusing the saints, hating them, and rejoicing in their calamities, was not the way to obtain their blessedness. Now you are shut out of that company, from which you first shut out yourselves; and are separated from them, with whom you would not be joined. You could not endure them in your houses, nor towns, nor scarce in the kingdom. You took them, as Ahab did Elijah, for the troublers of the land; and, as the apostles were taken, for men that turned the world upside down. If any thing fell out amiss, you thought all was owing to them. When they were dead or banished, you were glad they were gone, and thought the country well rid of them. They molested you by faithfully reproving your sins. Their holy conversation troubled your consciences, to see them so far excel you. It was a vexation to you to hear them pray or sing praises in their families. And is it any wonder if you be separated from them hereafter? The day is near when they will trouble you no more. Betwixt them and you will be a great gulf fixed. Even in this life, while the saints were mocked, destitute, afflicted, tormented, and while they had their personal imperfections; yet, in the judgment of the Holy Ghost, they were such of whom the world was not worthy, Heb. xi, 36, 38. Much more unworthy will the world be of their fellowship in glory

7. I know many will be ready to think, they could spare these things in this world well enough, and why

may they not be without them in the world to come? Therefore, to show them this loss of heaven will then be most tormenting, let them now consider, their understandings will be cleared to know their loss, and have more enlarged apprehensions concerning it; their consciences will make a closer application of it to themselves; their affections will no longer be stupified; nor their memories be treacherous.

8. The understanding of the ungodly will then be cleared, to know the worth of that which they have lost. Now they lament not their loss of God, because they never knew his excellence; nor the loss of that holy employment and society, for they were never sensible what they were worth. A man that has lost a jewel, and took it but for a common stone, is never troubled at his loss; but when he comes to know what he has lost, then he laments it. Though the understanding of the damned will not be sanctified, yet they will be cleared from a multitude of errors. They now think that their honours, estates, pleasures, health, and life, are better worth their labour, than the things of another world: but when these things have left them in misery, when they experience the things which before they did but read and hear of, they will be of another mind. They would not believe that water would drown, till they were in the sea, nor the fire burn, till they were cast into it; but when they feel, they will easily believe. All that error of mind which made them set light by God, and abhor his worship, and vilify his people, will then be confuted and removed by experience. Their knowledge shall be increased, that their sorrows may be increased. Poor souls! they would comparatively be happy, if their understandings were wholly taken from them, if they had no more knowledge than idiots, or brute beasts; or if they knew no more in hell than they did upon earth, their loss would less trouble them. How happy would they then think themselves, if they did not know there was such a place as heaven! Now, when their knowledge would help to prevent their misery, they will not know, or will not read and study that they may know; therefore, when their knowledge will not feed their con-

suming fire, they shall know whether they will or not. They are now in a deep sleep, and dream they are the happiest men in the world; but when death awakes them, how will their judgments be changed in a moment! and they that would not see, shall then see, and be ashamed.

9. As their understanding will be cleared, so it will be more enlarged, and made more capacious to conceive the worth of that glory which they have lost. The strength of their apprehensions, as well as the truth of them, will then be increased. What deep apprehensions of the wrath of God, the madness of sinning, the misery of sinners, have those souls that now endure this misery, in comparison with those on earth, that do but hear of it! What sensibility of the worth of life has the condemned man that is going to be executed, compared with what he was wont to have in the time of his prosperity! Much more will the actual loss of eternal blessedness make the damned exceedingly apprehensive of the greatness of their loss; and as a large vessel will hold more water than a shell, so will their more enlarged understandings contain more matter to feed their torment, than their shallow capacities can now do.

10. Their consciences also will make a truer and closer application of this doctrine to themselves, which will exceedingly tend to increase their torment. It will then be no hard matter to them to say, "This is my loss! and this is my everlasting remediless misery!" The want of this self application is the main cause why they are so little troubled now. They are hardly brought to believe that there is such a state of misery; but more hardly to believe that it is like to be their own. This makes so many sermons lost to them, and all threatenings and warnings in vain. Let a minister of Christ show them their misery ever so plainly and faithfully, they will not be persuaded they are so miserable. Let him tell them of the glory they must lose, and the sufferings they must feel, and they think he means not them, but some notorious sinners. It is one of the hardest things in the world, to bring a wicked man to know that he is wicked, or to make him see himself in a state of wrath and

condemnation. Though they may easily find by their strangeness to the new birth, and their enmity to holiness, that they never were partakers of them, yet they as verily expect to *see God* and *be saved*, as if they were the most sanctified persons in the world. How seldom do men cry out, after the plainest discovery of their state, *I am the man!* or acknowledge, that if they die in their present condition, they are undone for ever! But when they suddenly find themselves in the land of darkness, feel themselves in scorching flames, and see they are shut out of the presence of God for ever; then the application of God's anger to themselves will be the easiest matter in the world; they will then roar out these forced confessions, "O my misery! O my folly! O my inconceivable, irrecoverable loss!"

11. Then will their affections likewise be more lively, and no longer stupified. A hard heart now makes heaven and hell seem but trifles. We have showed them everlasting glory and misery, and they are as men asleep; our words are as stones cast against a wall, which fly back in our faces; we talk of terrible things, but it is to dead men; we search their wounds, but they never feel us; we speak to rocks rather than to men; the earth will as soon tremble as they. But when these dead souls are revived, what passionate sensibility! what working affections! what pangs of horror! what depth of sorrow will there then be! How violently will they fly in their own faces! How will they rage against their former madness! The lamentations of the most affectionate wife for the loss of her husband, or the tenderest mother for the loss of her children, will be nothing to theirs for the loss of heaven. O the self-accusing and self-tormenting fury of those forlorn creatures! How will they even tear their own hearts, and be God's executioners upon themselves! As themselves were the only meritorious cause of their sufferings, so themselves will be the chief executioners. Even Satan, as he was not so great a cause of their sinning as themselves, he will not be so great an instrument of their torment. How happy would they think themselves then, if they were turned into rocks, or any thing that had neither passion nor sense;

How happy, if they could then feel as lightly as they were wont to hear! if they could sleep out the time of execution, as they did the time of the sermons, that warned them of it! But their stupidity is gone! it will not be.

12. Their memories will moreover be as large and strong as their understanding and affections. Could they but lose the use of their memory, their loss of heaven being forgot, would little trouble them. Though they would account annihilation a singular mercy, they cannot lay aside any part of their being. Understanding, conscience, affections, memory, must all live to torment them, which should have helped to their happiness. As by these they should have fed upon the love of God, and drawn forth perpetually the joys of his presence, so by these must they feed upon his wrath, and draw forth continually the pains of his absence. Now they have no leisure to consider, nor any room in their memories for the things of another life; but then they shall have nothing else to do: their memories shall have no other employment. God would have had the doctrine of their eternal state written on the posts of their doors, on their hands and hearts; he would have them mind it, and mention it when they lay down and rose up, when they sat in their house, and when they walked by the way; and seeing they rejected this counsel of the Lord, therefore it shall be written always before them in the place of their thraldom, that which way soever they look, they may still behold it. It will torment them to think of the greatness of the glory they have lost. If it had been what they could have spared, or a loss to be repaired with any thing else, it had been a small matter. If it had been health, or wealth, or friends, or life, it had been nothing. But O, to lose that exceeding and eternal weight of glory! It will also torment them to think of the possibility they once had of obtaining it. Then they will remember, "Time was, when I was as fair for the kingdom as others. I was set upon the stage of the world, and if I had played my part wisely and faithfully I might now have had possession of the inheritance. I might have been among yonder blessed saints, who am

now tormented with these damned fiends. The Lord did set before me life and death; and having chose death, I deserve to suffer it. The prize was held out before me; if I had run well, I might have obtained it; if I had striven, I might have had the victory; if I had fought valiantly, I had been crowned." It will yet more torment them to remember, that their obtaining the crown was, not only possible, but very probable. It will wound them to think, "I had once the gales of the Spirit ready to have assisted me. I was proposing to be another man, to have cleaved to Christ, and forsook the world. I was almost resolved to have been wholly for God. I was once even turning from my base seducing lusts. I had cast off my old companions, and was associating myself with the godly. Yet I turned back, lost my hold, and broke my promise. I was almost persuaded to be a real Christian, yet I conquered those persuasions. What workings were in my heart, when a faithful minister pressed home the truth! O how fair was I once for heaven! I almost had it, and yet I have lost it. Had I followed on to seek the Lord, I had now been blessed among the saints."

13. It will exceedingly torment them to remember their lost opportunities. "How many weeks, and months, and years, did I lose, which if I had improved, I might now have been happy! wretch that I was! could I find no time to study the work, for which I had all my time? no time among all my labours, to labour for eternity? Had I time to eat, and drink, and sleep, and none to save my soul? Had I time for mirth and vain discourse, and none for prayer? Could I take time to secure the world, and none to try my title to heaven? O precious time! I had once enough, and now I must have no more. I had once so much, I knew not what to do with it; and now it is gone, and cannot be recalled. O that I had but one of those years to live over again! How speedily would I repent! How earnestly would I pray! How diligently would I hear! How closely would I examine my state! How strictly would I live! but 'tis now too late, alas! too late."

14. It will add to their calamity to remember how

often they were persuaded to return. "Fain would the minister have had me escape these torments. With what love and compassion did he beseech me! and yet I did but make a jest of it. How oft did he convince me! and yet I stifled all these convictions. How did he open to me my very heart! and yet I was loath to know the worst of myself. O how glad would he have been, if he could have seen me cordially turn to Christ! My godly friends admonished me: they told me what would com of my wilfulness and negligence at last; but I neithe. believed nor regarded them. How long did God himsel. condescend to entreat me! How did the Spirit strive with my heart, as if he was loath to take a denial! How did Christ stand knocking, one sabbath after another, and crying to me, Open, sinner, open thy heart to thy Saviour, and I will come in, and sup with thee, and thou with me! Why dost thou delay? How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? Wilt thou not be pardoned, and sanctified, and made happy? When shall it once be?" O how the recollection of such divine pleadings will passionately transport the damned with self-indignation! "Must I tire out the patience of Christ? Must I make the God of heaven follow me in vain, till I had wearied him with crying to me, Repent, return? O how justly is that patience now turned into fury, which falls upon me with irresistible violence! When the Lord cried to me, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be? my heart, or at least my patience, answered, Never. And now when I cry, How long shall it be till I am freed from this torment? how justly do I receive the same answer, Never, never."

15. It will also be most cutting to remember on what easy terms they might have escaped their misery. Their work was not to remove mountains, nor conquer king doms, nor fulfil the law, to the smallest tittle, nor satisfy justice for all their transgressions. The yoke was easy and the burthen light, which Christ would have laid upon them. It was but to repent, and cordially accep him for the Saviour; to renounce all other happiness and take the Lord for their supreme good; to renounce the world and the flesh, and submit to his meek and

gracious government; and to forsake the ways of their own devising, and walk in his holy delightful way. "Ah," thinks the poor tormented wretch, "how justly do I suffer all this, who would not be at so small pains to avoid it! Where was my understanding, when I neglected that gracious offer; when I called the Lord a hard master, and thought his pleasant service a bondage, and the service of the devil and the flesh the only freedom? Was I not a thousand times worse than mad, when I censured the holy way of God as needless preciseness; when I thought the laws of Christ too strict, and all too much that I did for the life to come? What would all sufferings for Christ and well doing have been, compared with these sufferings that I must undergo for ever? Would not the heaven which I have lost, have recompensed all my losses? And should not all my sufferings have been there forgotten? What if Christ had bid me do some great matter; whether to live in continual fears and sorrows, or to suffer death a hundred times over; should I not have done it? How much more, when he only said, Believe and be saved. Seek my face, and thy soul shall live. Take up thy cross, and follow me, and I will give thee everlasting life. O gracious offer! O easy terms! O cursed wretch, that would not be persuaded to accept them!"

16. This also will be a most tormenting consideration, to remember what they sold their eternal welfare for. When they compare the value of the pleasures of sin, with the value of the recompense of reward, how will the vast disproportion astonish them? To think of the low delights of the flesh, or the applauding breath of mortals, or the possessing heaps of gold; and then to think of everlasting glory! "This is all I had for my soul, my God, my hopes of blessedness!" It cannot possibly be expressed, how these thoughts will tear his very heart. Then will he exclaim against his folly. "O miserable wretch! Did I set my soul to sale for so base a price? Did I part with my God for a little dirt and dross; and sell my Saviour, as Judas, for a little silver? I had but a dream of delight, for my hopes of heaven; and now I am awaked, it is all vanished. My morsels

are now turned to gall, and my cups to wormwood. When they were past my taste, the pleasure perished And is this all that I have had for the inestimable treasure? What a mad exchange did I make! What if I had gained all the world, and lost my soul! But, alas! how small a part of the world was it, for which I gave up my part in glory!" O that sinners would think of this, when they are swimming in the delights of the flesh, an studying how to be rich and honourable in the world When they are desperately venturing upon known trans gression, and sinning against the checks of conscience!

17. It will add yet more to their torment, when they consider that they most wilfully procured their own destruction. Had they been forced to sin, it would much abate the rage of their consciences: or if they were punished for another man's transgressions; or any other had been the chief author of their ruin. But to think, it was the choice of their own will, and that none in the world could have forced them to sin against their wills; this will be a cutting thought: "Had I not enemies enough in the world (thinks this miserable creature) but I must be an enemy to myself? God would never give the devil, nor the world, so much power over me, as to force me to commit the least transgression. They could but entice, it was myself that yielded, and did the evil. And must I lay hands upon my own soul; and imbrue my hands in my own blood? Never had I so great an enemy as myself. Never did God offer any good to my soul, but I resisted him. He hath heaped mercy upon me, and renewed one deliverance after another, to draw my heart to him: yea, he hath gently chastised me, and made me groan under the fruit of my disobedience; and though I promised largely in my affliction, yet never was I heartily willing to serve him." Thus will it gnaw the hearts of these sinners, to remember that they were the cause of their own undoing; and that they wilfully and obstinately persisted in their rebellion, and wer mere volunteers in the service of the devil.

18. The wound in their consciences will be yet deeper when they shall not only remember it was their own doing, but that they were at so much cost and pains for

their own damnation. What great undertakings did they engage in to effect their ruin; to resist the Spirit of God; to overcome the power of mercies, judgments, and even the word of God; to subdue the power of reason, and silence conscience! All this they undertook, and performed. Though they walked in continual danger of the wrath of God, and knew he could lay them in the dust, and cast them into hell, in a moment; yet would they run upon all this. O the labour it costs sinners to be damned! Sobriety, with health and ease, they might have had at a cheaper rate; yet they will rather have gluttony and drunkenness, with poverty, shame, and sickness. Contentment they might have, with ease and delight; yet they will rather have covetousness and ambition, though it costs them cares and fears, labour of body, and distraction of mind. Though their anger be self torment, and revenge and envy consume their spirits; though uncleanness destroy their bodies, estates, and good names: yet will they do and suffer all this, rather than suffer their souls to be saved. With what rage will they lament their folly, and say, "Was damnation worth all my cost and pains? Might I not have been damned on free cost, but I must purchase it so dearly? I thought I could have been saved without so much ado; and could I not have been destroyed without so much ado? Must I so laboriously work out my own damnation, when God commanded me to work out my salvation? If I had done as much for heaven, as I did for hell, I had surely had it. I cried out of the tedious way of godliness, and the painful course of self denial; and yet I could be at a great deal more pains for Satan, and for death. Had I loved Christ as strongly as I did my pleasures, and profits, and honours, and thought on him as often, and sought him as painfully, O how happy had I now been! But justly do I suffer the flames of hell, for buying them so dear, rather than have heaven, when it was purchased to my hands!"

19. O that God would persuade thee, reader, to take up these thoughts now, for preventing the inconceivable calamity of taking them up in hell, as thy own tormentor! Say not, that they are only imaginary. Read what Dives

thought, being in torments, Luke xvi. As the joys of heaven are chiefly enjoyed by the rational soul in its rational actings, so must the pains of hell be suffered. As they will be men still, so will they feel and act as men.

CHAPTER VI.

The misery of those, who, besides losing the saint's rest, lose the enjoyments of time, and suffer the torments of hell.

1. The connexion of this with the preceding chapter. 2. The enjoyment of time which the damned lose: 3. Their presumptuous belief of their interest in God and Christ: 4. All their hopes: 5. All their peace of conscience: 6. All their carnal mirth: 7. All their sensual delight: 8. The torments of the damned are exceeding great: 9. The principal author of them is God himself: 10. The place or state of torment: 11. These torments are the effects of divine vengeance: 12. God will take pleasure in executing them: 13. Satan and sinners themselves will be God's executioners: 14. These torments will be universal; 15. without any mitigation; 16. and eternal. 17. The obstinate sinner convinced of his folly in venturing on these torments; 18. and entreated to fly for safety to Christ.

1. As godliness hath a promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come; and if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, then all meaner things shall be added unto us: so also are the ungodly threatened with the loss both of spiritual and temporal blessings; and because they sought not first God's kingdom and righteousness, therefore shall they lose both it and that which they did seek, and there shall be taken from them that little which they have. If they could but have kept their present enjoyments, they would not have much cared for the loss of heaven. If they had lost and forsaken all for Christ, they would have found all again in him; for he would have been all in all to them. But now they have forsaken Christ for other things, they shall lose Christ, and that also for which they forsook him; even the enjoyments of time, besides suffering the torments of hell.

2. Among the enjoyments of time, they shall particularly lose their presumptuous belief of their interest in the favour of God, and the merits of Christ; all their hopes; all their false peace of conscience; all their carnal mirth; and all their sensual delights.

3. They shall lose their presumptuous belief of their interest in the favour of God and the merits of Christ. This false belief now supports their spirits, and defends them from the terrors that would otherwise seize upon them. But what will ease their trouble, when they can believe no longer, nor rejoice any longer? If a man be near to the greatest mischief, and yet strongly conceit that he is in safety, he may be as cheerful as if all were well. If there were no more to make a man happy, but to believe that he is so, or shall be so, happiness would be far more common than it is like to be. As true faith is the leading grace in the regenerate, so is false faith the leading vice in the unregenerate. Why do such multitudes sit still, when they might have pardon, but that they verily think they are pardoned already? If you could ask thousands in hell, what madness brought them thither? they would most of them answer, "We made sure of being saved till we found ourselves damned. We would have been more earnest seekers of regeneration, and the power of godliness, but we verily thought we were Christians before. We have flattered ourselves into these torments, and now there is no remedy." Reader, I must in faithfulness tell thee, that the confident belief of their good state, which the careless, unholy, unhumbled multitude so commonly boast of, will prove in the end but a soul damning delusion. There is none of this believing in hell. It was Satan's stratagem, that being blindfold they might follow him the more boldly: but then he will uncover their eyes, and they shall see where they are.

4. They shall lose also all their hopes. In this life, though they were threatened with the wrath of God, yet their hope of escaping it bore up their hearts. We can now scarce speak with the vilest drunkard, or swearer, or scoffer, but he hopes to be saved for all this. O happy world, if salvation were as common as this hope! Nay, so strong are men's hopes, that they will dispute the cause with Christ himself at judgment, and plead their having eat and drank in his presence, and prophesied in his name, and in his name cast out devils; they will stiffly deny that they ever neglected Christ in hun-

ger, nakedness, or prison, till he confutes them with the sentence of their condemnation. O the sad state of these men, when they must bid farewell to all their hopes! When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth, Prov. xi, 7. The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as their giving up the ghost, Job xi, 20. The giving up the ghost is a fit, but a terribl esemblance of a wicked man's giving up his hopes. A he soul departeth not from the body without the great est pain, so doth the hope of the wicked depart. The soul departs from the body suddenly, in a moment, which hath there delightfully continued so many years; just so doth the hope of the wicked depart. The soul will never more return to live with the body in this world; and the hope of the wicked takes an everlasting farewell of his soul. A miracle of resurrection shall again unite soul and body, but there shall be no such miraculous resurrection of the damned's hope. Methinks it is the most pitiable sight this world affords, to see such an ungodly person dying, and to think of his soul and his hopes departing together. With what a sad change he appears in another world! Then if a man could but ask that hopeless soul, "Are you as confident of salvation as you were wont to be?" what a sad answer would be returned! O that careless sinners would be awakened to think of this in time! Reader, rest not till thou canst give a reason of all thy hopes, grounded upon Scripture promises; that they purify thy heart; that they quicken thy endeavours in godliness; that the more thou hopest, the less thou sinnest, and the more exact is thy obedience. If thy hopes be such as these, go on in the strength of the Lord, hold fast thy hope, and never shall it make thee ashamed. But if thou hast not one sound evidence of a work of grace on thy soul, cast away thy hopes. Despair of ever being saved, except thou be born again; or of seeing God, without holiness or of having part in Christ, except thou love him abov father, mother, or thy own life. This kind of despair i one of the first steps to heaven. If a man be quite out of his way, what must be the first means to bring him in

again? He must despair of ever coming to his journey's end in the way that he is in: if his home be eastward, and he is going westward, as long as he hopes he is right, he will go on; and as long as he goes on hoping, he goes farther amiss: when he despairs of coming home, except he turn back, then he will return, and then he may hope. Just so it is, sinner, with thy soul: thou art born out of the way to heaven, and hast proceeded many a year; thou goest on, and hopest to be saved, because thou art not so bad as many others. Except thou throwest away those hopes, and see that thou hast all this while been quite out of the way to heaven, thou wilt never return and be saved. There is nothing in the world more likely to keep thy soul out of heaven, than thy false hopes of being saved, while thou art out of the way to salvation. See then how it will aggravate the misery of the damned, that, with the loss of heaven, they shall lose all that hope of it, which now supports them.

5. They will lose all that false peace of conscience which makes their present life so easy. Who would think, that sees how quietly the multitude of the ungodly live, that they must very shortly lie down in everlasting flames? They are as free from the fears of hell as an obedient believer; and for the most part have less disquiet of mind than those who shall be saved. Happy men, if this peace would prove lasting! When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape, 1 Thess. v, 3. O cruel peace which ends in such a war! The soul of every man by nature is Satan's garrison; all is at peace in such a man till Christ comes, and gives it terrible alarms of judgment and hell, batters it with the ordnance of his threats and terrors, forces it to yield to his mere mercy, and take him for the Governor; then doth he cast out Satan, overcome him, take from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils, Luke xi, 22, and then doth he establish a firm and lasting peace. If therefore thou art yet in that first peace, never think it will endure. Can thy soul have lasting peace, in enmity with Christ?

Can he have peace against whom God proclaims war? I wish thee no greater good, than that God break in upon thy careless heart, and shake thee out of thy false peace, and make thee lie down at the feet of Christ, and say, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? and so receive from him a better and a surer peace, which will never be quite broken, but the beginning of thy everlasting peace, and not perish in thy perishing, as the groundles peace of the world will do.

6. They shall lose all their carnal mirth. They will themselves say of their laughter, it is mad, and of their mirth, what doeth it? Eccl. ii, 2. It was but as the crackling of thorns under a pot, Eccl. vii, 6. It made a blaze for a while, but it was presently gone, and returned no more. The talk of death and judgment was irksome to them, because it damped their mirth. They could not endure to think of their sin and danger, because these thoughts sunk their spirits. They knew not what it was to weep for sin, or to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. They could not laugh away sorrow, and sing away cares, and drive away those melancholy thoughts. To meditate, and pray, they fancied would be enough to make them miserable or run mad. Poor souls! what a misery will that life be, where you shall have nothing but sorrow; intense heart piercing, multiplied sorrow; when you shall neither have the joys of saints, nor your own former joys! Do you think there is one merry heart in hell; or one joyful countenance, or jesting tongue? You now cry, a little mirth is worth a great deal of sorrow. But surely, a little godly sorrow, which would have ended in eternal joy, had been worth much more than all your foolish mirth: for the end of such mirth is sorrow.

7. They shall also lose all their sensual delights. That which they esteemed their chief good, their heaven, their god, must they lose, as well as God himself What a fall will the proud ambitious man have from the top of his honours! As his dust and bones will not be known from the dust and bones of the poorest beggar so neither will his soul be honoured or favoured more than theirs. What a number of the great, noble, and

learned, will be shut out of the presence of Christ? They shall not find their magnificent buildings, soft beds, and easy couches. They shall not view their curious gardens, their pleasant meadows, and plenteous harvests. Their tables will not be so furnished nor attended. The rich man is there no more clothed in purple and fine linen, nor fareth sumptuously every day. *There* is no expecting the admiration of beholders. They shall spend their time in sadness, and not in sports and pastimes. What an alteration will they *then* find! The heat of their lust will be then abated. How will it even cut them to the heart to look each other in the face! What an interview will there then be, cursing the day that ever they saw one another! O that sinners would now remember, and say, "Will these delights accompany us into the other world? Will not the remembrance of them be then our torment? Shall we then take this partnership in vice for true friendship? Why should we sell such lasting, incomprehensible joys for a taste of seeming pleasure? Come, as we have sinned together let us pray together, that God would pardon us; and let us help one another towards heaven instead of helping to deceive and destroy each other! O that men knew but what they desire, when they would so fain have all things suited to the desires of the flesh! It is but to desire their temptations to be increased, and their snares strengthened.

8. As the loss of the saint's rest will be aggravated by losing the enjoyments of time, it will be much more so by suffering the torments of hell. The exceeding greatness of such torments may appear, by considering the principal author of them, who is God himself; the place or state of torment; that these torments are the fruit of divine vengeance; that the Almighty takes pleasure in them; that Satan and sinners themselves shall be God's executioners; that these torments shall be universal, without mitigation, and without end.

9. The principal author of hell torments is God himself. As it was no less than God whom the sinner had offended, so it is no less than God who will punish them for their offences. He hath prepared those torments for his enemies. His continued anger will still be devour-

ing them. His breath of indignation will kindle the flames. His wrath will be an intolerable burden to their souls. If it were but a creature they had to do with, they might better bear it. Wo to him that falls under the strokes of the Almighty! it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb. x, 31. It were nothing, in comparison to this, if the world were against them, or if the strength of all creatures were united in one to inflict their penalty. They had now rather venture to displease God than displease a landlord, a customer, a master, a friend, a neighbour, or their own flesh; but then they will wish a thousand times in vain, that they had been hated of all the world, rather than have lost the favour of God. What a consuming fire is his wrath! If it be kindled here but a little, how do we wither like the grass! How soon doth our strength decay, and turn to weakness, and our beauty to deformity! The flames do not so easily run through the dry stubble, as the wrath of God will consume these wretches. They that could not bear a prison, or gibbet, or fire, for Christ, nor scarce a few scoffs, how will they now bear the devouring flames of divine wrath.

10. The place or state of torment is purposely ordained to glorify the justice of God. When God would glorify his power, he made the worlds. The comely order of all creatures declareth his wisdom. His providence is shown in sustaining all things. When a spark of his wrath kindles upon the earth, the whole world, except only eight persons, are drowned; Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, are burnt with fire from heaven; the sea shuts her mouth upon some, the earth opens and swallows up others; the pestilence destroys by thousands. What a standing witness of the wrath of God is the present deplorable state of the Jews! Yet the glorifying the mercy and justice of God is intended most eminently for the life to come. As God will then glorify his mercy in a way that is now beyond the comprehension of the saints that must enjoy it; so also will he manifest his justice to be indeed the justice of God. The everlasting flames of hell will not be thought too hot for the rebellious; and when they have there burned through millions

of ages, he will not repent him of the evil which is befallen them. Wo to the soul that is thus set up as a butt, for the wrath of the Almighty to shoot at! and as a bush that must burn in the flames of his jealousy, and never be consumed!

11. The torments of the damned must be extreme, because they are the effect of divine vengeance. Wrath is terrible, but revenge implacable. When the great God hall say, "My rebellious creatures shall now pay for all the abuse of my patience. Remember how I waited your leisure in vain, how I stooped to persuade and entreat you. Did you think I would always be so slighted?" Then will he be revenged for every abused mercy, and for all their neglects of Christ and grace. O that men would foresee this, and please God better in preventing their wo!

12. Consider also, that though God had rather men would accept of Christ and mercy, yet when they persist in rebellion, he will take pleasure in their execution. He tells us, fury is not in me; yet he adds, who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle; I would go through them, I would burn them together. Wretched creatures! when he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour, Isa. xxvii, 4, 11. As the Lord rejoiced over them to do them good; so the Lord will rejoice over them to destroy them, and to bring them to nought, Deut. xxviii, 63. Wo to the soul whom God rejoiceth to punish! He will laugh at their calamity, he will mock when their fear cometh; when their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon them, Prov. i, 26, 27. Terrible thing, when none in heaven or earth can help them but God, and he shall rejoice in their calamity! Though Scripture speaks of God's laughing and mocking, not literally, but after the manner of men; yet it is such an act of God in tormenting the sinner, which cannot otherwise be more fitly expressed.

13. Consider that Satan and themselves shall be God's executioners. He that was here so successful in drawing them from Christ, will then be the instrument of their

punishment, for yielding to his temptations. That is the reward he will give them for all their service; for their rejecting the commands of God, and forsaking Christ, and neglecting their souls at his persuasion. If they had served Christ as faithfully as they did Satan, he would have given them a better reward. It is also most just, that they should be their own tormenters, that they may see their whole destruction is of themselves and then who can they complain of but themselves?

14. Consider also that their torment will be universal As all parts have joined in sin, so must they all partake in the torment. The soul, as it was the chief in sinning, shall be the chief in suffering, and as it is of a more excellent nature than the body, so will its torments far exceed bodily torments; and as its joys far surpass all sensual pleasures, so the pains of the soul exceed corporal pains. It is not only a soul, but a sinful soul that must suffer. Fire will not burn, except the fuel be combustible; but if the wood be dry, how fiercely will it burn! The guilt of their sins will be to damned souls like tinder to gunpowder, to make the flames of hell take hold upon them with fury. The body must also bear its part. The body which was so carefully looked to, so tenderly cherished, so curiously dressed; what must it now endure? How are its haughty looks now taken down! How little will those flames regard its comeliness and beauty! Those eyes which were wont to be delighted with curious sights, must then see nothing but what shall terrify them; an angry God above them, with those saints whom they scorned, enjoying the glory which they have lost; and about them will be only devils and damned souls. How will they look back, and say, "Are all our feasts, and games, and revels, come to this?" Those ears which were accustomed to music and songs, shall hear the shrieks and cries of their damned companions; children crying out against their parents, that gave encouragement and example in evil; husbands and wives masters and servants, ministers and people, magistrates nd subjects, charging their misery upon one another, for discouraging in duty, conniving at sin, and being silent, when they should have plainly foretold the

danger. Thus will soul and body be companions in woe.

15. Far greater will these torments be, because without mitigation. In this life, when told of hell, or conscience troubled their peace, they had comforters at hand; their carnal friends, their business, their company, their mirth. They could drink, play, or sleep away their sorrows. But now all these remedies are vanished. Their hard, presumptuous, unbelieving heart was a wall to defend them against trouble of mind. Satan was himself their comforter, as he was to our first mother; "Hath God said, ye shall not eat? ye shall not surely die. Doth God tell you that you shall lie in hell? It is no such matter. God is more merciful. Or if there be a hell, what need you fear it? Are not you Christians? Was not the blood of Christ shed for you?" Thus as the Spirit of Christ is the comforter of the saints, so Satan is the comforter of the wicked. Never was a thief more careful lest he should awake the people, when he is robbing the house, than Satan is not to awaken a sinner. But when the sinner is dead, then Satan hath done flattering and comforting. Which way then will the forlorn sinner look for comfort? They that drew him into the snare, and promised him safety, now forsake him, and are forsaken themselves. His comforts are gone, and the righteous God, whose forewarnings he made light of, will now make good his word against him to the least tittle.

16. But the greatest aggravation of these torments will be their eternity. When a thousand millions of ages are past, they are as fresh to begin as the first day. If there were any hope of an end, it would ease the damned to foresee it; but *for ever*, is an intolerable thought. They were never weary of sinning, nor will God be weary of plaguing. They never heartily repented of sin, nor will God repent of their suffering. They broke the laws of the eternal God, therefore shall suffer eternal punishment. They knew it was an everlasting kingdom which they refused, and what wonder if they are everlastingly shut out of it? Their immortal souls were guilty of the trespass, and therefore must immortally suffer the pains.

What happy men would they think themselves, if they might have lain still in their graves, or might but there lie down again! How will they call and cry, "O death, whither art thou now gone! Now come, and cut off this doleful life. O that these pains would break my heart, and end my being! O that I might once at last die! O that I had never had a being!" These groans will the thoughts of eternity wring from their hearts. They were wont to think sermons and prayers long! how long then will they think these endless torments? What difference is there betwixt the length of their pleasures and their pains! The one continued but a moment, the other endureth through all eternity. Sinner, remember how time is almost gone. Thou art standing at the door of eternity; and death is waiting to open the door, and put thee in. Go sleep but a few more nights, and stir about a few more days on earth, and then thy nights and days shall end; thy thoughts, and cares, and pleasures, shall all be devoured by eternity; thou must enter upon the state which shall never be changed. As the joys of heaven are beyond our conception, so are the pains of hell. Everlasting torment is inconceivable torment.

17. But methinks I see the obstinate sinner desperately resolving, "If I must be damned, there is no remedy; rather than I will live as the Scripture requires, I will put it to the venture; I shall escape as well as the rest of my neighbours, and we will even bear it as well as we can." Alas! poor creature! let me beg this of thee, before thou dost so flatly resolve, that thou wouldst lend me thy attention to a few questions, and weigh them with the reason of a man. Who art thou, that thou shouldst bear the wrath of God? Art thou a god, or a man? What is thy strength? Is it not the strength of wax or stubble to resist the fire; or as chaff to the wind; or as dust before the fierce whirlwind? If thy strength were as iron, and thy bones as brass; if thy foundation were as the earth, and thy power as the heaven; yet shouldst thou perish at the breath of his indignation how much more when thou art but a piece of breathing clay, kept a few days from being eaten with worms, by the mere support and favour of him whom thou art thus

resisting? Why dost thou tremble at the signs of almighty power and wrath? At claps of thunder, or flashes of lightning; or that unseen power which rends in pieces the mighty oaks, and tears down the strongest buildings; or at the plague, when it rageth around thee! If thou hadst seen the plagues of Egypt, or the earth swallow up Dathan and Abiram; or Elijah bring fire from heaven to destroy the captains and their companies, would not any of these sights have daunted thy spirits? How then canst thou bear the plagues of hell? Why art thou dismayed with such small sufferings as befall thee here? A tooth ache, a fit of the gout, or stone, the loss of a limb, or falling into beggary and disgrace? And yet all these laid together, will be one day accounted a happy state, in comparison of that which is suffered in hell. Why does the approach of death so much affright thee? O how cold it strikes to thy heart! And would not the grave be accounted a paradise, compared with that place of torment which thou slightest? Is it an intolerable thing to burn part of the body, by holding it in the fire? What then will it be to suffer ten thousand times more for ever in hell? Why does the thought or mention of hell occasion any disquiet in thy spirit? And canst thou endure the torments themselves? Why doth the rich man complain to Abraham of his torment in hell? Or thy dying companions lose their courage, and change their haughty language? Didst thou never see or speak with a man under despair? How uncomfortable was his talk? How burthensome his life? Nothing he possessed did him good; he had no sweetness in meat or drink; the sight of friends troubled him; he was weary of life, and fearful of death. If the misery of the damned can be endured, why cannot a man more easily endure these foretastes of hell? What if thou shouldst see the devil appear to thee in some terrible shape? Would not thy heart fail thee, and thy hair stand on end? And how wilt thou endure to live for ever, where thou shalt have no other company but devils, and the damned, and shalt not only see them, but be tormented with them and by them? Let me once more ask, if the wrath of God be so light, why did the Son of God himself make so great a

matter of it? It made him sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. The Lord of life cried, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. And on the cross, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Surely if any one could have borne these sufferings easily, it would have been Jesus Christ. He had another measure of strength to bear it than thou hast. Wo to thee, sinner, for thy mad security! Dost thou think to find it tolerable to thee, which was so heavy to Christ? Nay, the Son of God is cast into a bitter agony, and bloody sweat, only under the curse of the law; and yet thou, feeble foolish creature, makest nothing to bear also the curse of the gospel, which requires a much sorer punishment, Heb. x, 29. The good Lord bring thee to thy right mind by repentance, lest thou buy thy wit at too dear a rate!

18. And now, reader, I demand thy resolution, what use wilt thou make of all this? Shall it all be lost to thee? or wilt thou consider it in good earnest? Thou hast cast away many a warning of God; wilt thou do so by this also? Take heed, God will not always stand warning and threatening. The hand of revenge is lifted up, the blow is coming, and wo to him on whom it lighteth! Dost thou throw away the book, and say, it speaks of nothing but hell and damnation? Thus thou usedst also to complain of the preacher. But wouldst thou not have us tell thee of these things? Should we be guilty of the blood of thy soul, by keeping silent that which God hath charged us to make known? Wouldst thou perish in ease and silence, and have us to perish with thee, rather than displease thee, by speaking the truth? If thou wilt be guilty of such inhuman cruelty, God forbid we should be guilty of such sottish folly. This kind of preaching or writing is the ready way to be hated; and the desire of applause is so natural, that few delight in such a displeasing way. But consider, are these things true, or are they not? If they were not true, I would heartily join with thee against any that fright people without a cause. But if these threatenings be the word of God, what a wretch art thou, that wilt not hear it, and consider it! If thou art one of the people of God, this

doctrine will be a comfort to thee, and not a terror. If thou art yet unregenerate, methinks thou shouldst be as fearful to hear of heaven, as of hell, except the bare name of heaven or salvation be sufficient. Preaching heaven and mercy to thee, is entreating thee to seek them and not reject them; and preaching hell, is but to persuade thee to avoid it. If thou wert quite past hope of escaping t, then it were in vain to tell thee of hell; but as long as thou art alive, there is hope of thy recovery, and therefore all means must be used to awake thee from thy lethargy. Alas! what heart can now possibly conceive, or what tongue express, the pains of those souls, that are under the wrath of God? Then, sinners, you will be crying to Jesus Christ, "O mercy! O pity, pity on a poor soul!" Why, I do now, in the name of the Lord Jesus, cry to thee, "O have mercy, have pity, man, upon thy own soul!" Shall God pity thee, who wilt not be entreated to pity thyself? If thy horse see but a pit before him, thou canst scarcely force him in; and wilt thou so obstinately cast thyself into hell, when the danger is foretold thee? Who can stand before the indignation of the Lord? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? Nahum i, 6. Methinks thou shouldst need no more words, but presently cast away thy soul damning sins, and wholly deliver up thyself to Christ. Resolve on it immediately, and let it be done, that I may see thy face in rest among the saints. May the Lord persuade thy heart to strike this covenant without any longer delay! But if thou be hardened unto death, and there be no remedy, yet say not another day but that thou wast faithfully warned, and hadst a friend that would fain have prevented thy damnation.

CHAPTER VII.

The necessity of diligently seeking the saint's rest.

1. The saint's rest surprisingly neglected; particularly, 2. by the worldly minded, 3. the profane multitude, 4. formal professors, 5–8. and by the godly themselves, whether magistrates, ministers, or people. 9. The author mourns the neglect, and excites the reader to diligence, by considering, 10. the ends we aim at, the work we have to do, the shortness and uncertainty of our time, and diligence of our enemies; 11. Our talents, mercies, relations to God, and our afflictions; 12. What assistances we have, what principles we profess, and our certainty never to do enough; 13. That every grace tends to diligence, that to trifle is lost labour, that much time is mispent, and that our recompense and labour will be proportionable; 14. That striving is the divine appointment, all men do or will approve it, the best Christians at death lament their want of it, heaven is often lost for want of it, but never obtained without it; 15. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are in earnest, God is so in hearing and answering prayer, ministers in their instructions and exhortations, all the creatures in serving us, sinners in serving the devil, as we were once, and now are, in worldly things, and in heaven and hell all are in earnest. 16. The chapter concludes with proposing some awakening questions to the ungodly, and 17. also to the godly.

1. If there be so certain and glorious a rest for the saints, why is there no more industrious seeking after it? One would think, if a man did but hear of such unspeakable glory to be obtained, and believed what he heard to be true, he should be transported with the vehemency of his desire after it, and should almost forget to eat or drink, and should care for nothing else, and speak of and inquire after nothing else, but how to get this treasure. And yet people who hear it daily, and profess to believe it as a fundamental article of their faith, do as little mind it, or labour for it, as if they had never heard of any such thing, or did not believe one word they hear. This reproof is more particularly applicable to the worldly minded, the profane multitude, the formal professors, and even to the godly themselves.

2. The worldly minded are so taken up in seeking the things below, that they have neither heart nor time to seek this rest. O foolish sinners, who hath bewitched you? The world bewitches men into brute beasts, and draws them some degrees beyond madness. See what riding and running, what scrambling and catching for a thing of naught, while eternal rest lies neglected! What

contriving and caring to get a step higher in the world than their brethren, while they neglect the kingly dignity of the saints! What insatiable pursuit of fleshly pleasures, while they look on the praises of God, the joy of angels, as a tiresome burden! What unwearied diligence in raising their posterity, enlarging their possessions; perhaps for a poor living from hand to mouth; while judgment is drawing near; but, how it shall go with them then, never puts them to one hour's consideration! What rising early, and sitting up late, and labouring from year to year, to maintain themselves and children in credit till they die; but what shall follow after, they never think on! Yet these men cry, "May we not be saved without so much ado?" How early do they rouse up their servants to their labour; but how seldom do they call them to prayer, or reading the Scriptures! What hath this world done for its lovers and friends, that it is so eagerly followed, and painfully sought after, while Christ and heaven stand by, and few regard them? or what will the world do for them for the time to come? The common entrance into it is through anguish and sorrow. The passage through it is with continual care and labour. The passage out of it is the sharpest of all. O unreasonable, bewitched men! Will mirth and pleasure stick close to you? Will gold and worldly glory prove fast friends to you in the time of your greatest need? Will they hear your cries in the day of your calamity? At the hour of your death, will they either answer or relieve you? Will they go along with you to the other world, and bribe the judge, and bring you off clear, or purchase you a place among the blessed? Why then did the rich man want a drop of water to cool his tongue? Or are the sweet morsels of present delight and honour of more worth than eternal rest? and will they recompense the loss of that enduring treasure? Can there be the least hope of any of these? Ah vile, deceitful world! How oft have we heard thy most faithful servants at last complaining, "O the world hath deceived me, and undone me! It flattered me in my prosperity, but now it turns me off in my necessity. If I had as faithfully served Christ, as I have served it, he would

not have left me thus comfortless and hopeless." Thus they complain, and yet succeeding sinners will take no warning.

3. As for the profane multitude, they will not be persuaded to be at so much pains for salvation, as to perform the common outward duties of religion. If they have the gospel preached in the town where they dwell, it may be they will give the hearing to it one part of the day, and stay at home the other; or if the master come to the congregation, yet part of his family must stay at home. If they want the plain and powerful preaching of the gospel, how few are there in a whole town, who will travel a mile or two to hear abroad; though they will go many miles to the market for provisions for their bodies! They know the Scripture is the law of God by which they must be acquitted or condemned in judgment; and that the man is blessed who delights in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth meditate day and night: yet will they not be at pains to read a chapter once a day. If they carry a Bible to church, and neglect it all the week, this is the most use they make of it. Though they are commanded to pray without ceasing, and to pray always; yet they will neither pray constantly with their families, nor in secret. Though Daniel would rather be cast to the lions, than forbear praying three times a day in his house, where his enemies might hear him; yet these men will rather venture to be an eternal prey to Satan, the roaring lion, than thus seek their own safety. Or their cold and heartless prayers invite God to a denial: for among men it is taken for granted, that he who asks but slightly and seldom, cares not much for what he asks. They judge themselves unworthy of heaven, who think it is not worth their more constant and earnest request. If every door was marked, where families do not morning and evening earnestly seek the Lord in prayer, that his wrath might be poured out upon such prayerless families, our towns would be as places overthrown by the plague, the people being dead within, and the mark of judgment without. I fear where one house would escape, ten would be marked out for death; and then they might teach their doors to pray, Lord,

have mercy upon us, because the people would not pray themselves. But especially if we could see what men do in their secret chambers, how few would you find in a whole town that spend one quarter of an hour, morning and night, in earnest supplication to God for their souls! O how little do these men set by eternal rest! Thus do they slothfully neglect all endeavours for their own welfare, except some public duty in the congregation, which custom or credit engages them to. Persuade them to read good books, learn the grounds of religion in their catechism, and sanctify the Lord's day in prayer, and meditation, and hearing the word, and forbearing all worldly thoughts and speeches; and what a tedious life do they take this to be! As if they thought heaven were not worth doing so much for.

4. Another sort of formal professors, who will be brought to an outward duty, but to the inward work of religion they will never be persuaded. They will preach, or hear, or read, or talk of heaven, or pray in their families, and take part with the persons or causes that are good, and desire to be esteemed among the godly; but you can never bring them to the more spiritual duties; as to be constant and fervent in secret prayer and meditation; conscientious in self examination; heavenly minded; to watch over their hearts, words, and ways; to mortify the flesh, and not make provision to fulfil its lusts; to love and heartily forgive an enemy, and prefer their brethren before themselves; to lay all they have, or do, at the feet of Christ, and prize his service and favour before all; to prepare to die, and willingly leave all to go to Christ. Hypocrites will never be persuaded to any of these. If a hypocrite entertains the gospel with joy, it is only in the surface of his soul; he never gives the seed any depth of earth: it changes his opinion, but never melts and new moulds his heart, nor sets up Christ there in full power and authority. As his religion lies most in opinion, so does his chief business and conversation. He is usually an ignorant, bold, conceited dealer in controversies, rather than an humble embracer of known truth, with love and obedience. By his slighting the judgments and persons of others, and

seldom talking with seriousness and humility of the great things of Christ, he shows his religion dwells in the brain, and not in his heart. The wind of temptation carries him away as a feather, because his heart is not established with Christ and grace. He never in private conversation humbly bewails his soul's imperfections, or tenderly acknowledges his unkindness to Christ; but gathers his greatest comforts from his being of such a judgment or party. The like may be said of the worldly hypocrite, who chokes the gospel with the thorns of worldly cares and desires. He is convinced that he must be religious, or he cannot be saved; and therefore he reads, and hears, and prays, and forsakes his former company and courses; but he resolves to keep his hold of present things. His judgment may say, God is the chief good; but his heart and affections never said so The world hath more of his affections than God, and therefore is his god. Though he does not run after opinions and novelties, like the former, yet he will be of that opinion which will best serve his worldly advantage. And as one whose spirits are enfeebled by some pestilential disease; so this man's spirits, being possessed by the plague of a worldly disposition, how feeble is he in secret prayer! How superficial in examination and meditation! How poor in heart watchings! How nothing at all in loving and walking with God, rejoicing in him, or desiring him! So that both these, and many other sorts of hypocrites, though they will go with you in the easy outside of religion, yet will never be at the pains of inward and spiritual duties.

5. And even the godly themselves are too lazy seekers of their everlasting rest. Alas! what a disproportion is there between our light and heat! our profession and our prosecution! Who makes that haste, as if it were for heaven? How still we stand! How idly we work! How we talk, and jest, and trifle away our time! How deceitfully we perform the work of God! How we hear, as if we heard not; and pray, as if we prayed not; and examine, and meditate, and reprove sin, as if we did it not; and enjoy Christ as if we enjoyed him not; as if we had learned to use the things of heaven, as the apos-

tle teacheth us to use the things of the world! What a frozen stupidity hath benumbed us! We are dying, and we know it not, and yet we stir! we are at the door of eternal happiness or misery, and yet we perceive it not; death knocks, and we hear it not; God and Christ call and cry to us, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts; work, while it is day, for the night cometh when none can work. Now ply your business, labour for your lives, lay out all your strength and time; now or never;" and yet we stir no more than if we were half asleep! What haste do death and judgment make How fast do they come on! They are almost at us, and yet what little haste we make! Lord, what a senseless, earthly, hellish thing is a hard heart! Where is the man that is in earnest a Christian? Methinks men every where make but a trifle of their eternal state. They look after it but a little by the by; they do not make it the business of their lives. If I were not sick myself of the same disease, with what tears should I mix this ink! With what groans should I express these complaints! And with what heart grief should I mourn over this universal deadness!

6. Do magistrates among us seriously perform their work? Are they zealous for God? Do they build up his house? Are they tender of his honour? Do they second the word? And fly in the face of sin and sinners, as the disturbers of our peace, and the only cause of all our miseries? Do they improve all their power, wealth, and honour, and all their influence, for the greatest advantage to the kingdom of Christ, as men that must shortly give an account of their stewardship!

7. How thin are those ministers that are serious in their work! Nay, how mightily do the very best fail in this! Do we cry out of men's disobedience to the gospel in the demonstration of the Spirit, and deal with sin as the destroying fire in our towns, and by force pull men out of it? Do we persuade our people, as those should, that know the terrors of the Lord? Do we press Christ, and regeneration, and faith, and holiness, believing that without these, men can never have life? Do our bowels yearn over the ignorant, careless, and obstinate multi-

tude? When we look them in the face, do our hearts melt over them, lest we should never see their faces in rest? Do we, as Paul, tell them weeping, of their fleshly and earthly disposition; and teach them publicly, and from house to house, at all seasons, and with many tears? And do we entreat them, as for their souls' salvation? Or rather, do we not study to gain the approbation of critical hearers: as if a minister's business were of no more weight but to tell a smooth tale for an hour, and look no more after the people till the next sermon? Does not carnal prudence control our fervour, and make our discourses lifeless, on subjects the most piercing? How gently we handle those sins, which will so cruelly handle our people's souls! In a word, our want of seriousness about the things of heaven, charms the souls of men into formality, and brings them to this customary, careless hearing, which undoes them. May the Lord pardon the great sin of the ministry in this thing; and, in particular, my own.

8. And are the people more serious than magistrates or ministers? How can it be expected? Reader, look but to thyself, and resolve the question. Ask conscience, and suffer it to tell thee truly. Hast thou set thy eternal rest before thine eyes, as the great business thou hast to do in this world? Hast thou watched and laboured, with all thy might, that no man take thy crown? Hast thou made haste lest thou shouldst come too late, and die before thy work be done? Hast thou pressed on through crowds of opposition, towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, still reaching forth unto those things which are before? Can conscience witness your secret cries, and groans, and tears? Can your family witness, that you taught them the fear of the Lord, and warned them not to go to that place of torment? Can your minister witness, that he has heard you cry out, What shall I do to be saved? and that you have followed him with complaints against your corruptions, and with earnest inquiries after the Lord? Can your neighbours about you witness, that you reprove the ungodly, and take pains to save the souls of your brethren? Let all these witnesses judge this day

between God and you, whether you are in earnest about eternal rest. You can tell by his work, whether your servant has loitered, though you did not see him; so you may, by looking at your own works. Is your love to Christ, your faith, your zeal, and other graces, strong or weak? What are your joys? What is your assurance? Is all in order within you? Are you ready to die, if this should be the day? Do the souls, among whom you have conversed, bless you? Judge by this, and it will quickly appear whether you have been laborious or loiterers.

9. O blessed rest, how unworthily art thou neglected! O glorious kingdom, how art thou undervalued! Little know the careless sons of men, what a state they set so light by. If they once knew it, they would surely be of another mind. I hope thou, reader, art sensible, what a desperate thing it is to trifle about eternal rest; and how deeply thou hast been guilty of this thyself. And I hope also, thou wilt not now suffer this conviction to die. Should the physician tell thee, "If you will observe but one thing, I doubt not to cure your disease," wouldst thou not observe it? So I tell thee, if thou wilt observe but this one thing for thy soul, I make no doubt of thy salvation; shake off thy sloth, and put to all thy strength, and be a Christian indeed; I know not then what can hinder thy happiness. As far as thou art gone from God, seek him with all thy heart, and no doubt thou shalt find him. As unkind as thou hast been to Jesus Christ, seek him heartily, obey him unreservedly, and thy salvation is as sure as if thou hadst it already. But full as Christ's satisfaction is, free as the promise is, large as the mercy of God is, if thou only talk of these, when thou shouldst eagerly entertain them, thou wilt be never the better for them; and if thou loiter, when thou shouldst labour, thou wilt lose the crown. Fall to work then speedily and seriously, and bless God that thou hast yet time to do it. And to show that I urge thee not without cause, I will here add a variety of animating considerations. Rouse up thy spirit, and as Moses said to Israel, set thy heart unto all the words which I testify unto thee this day; for it is not a vain thing, because it is your life, Deut.

xxxii, 46, 47. May the Lord open thy heart, and fasten his counsel effectually upon thee!

10. Consider how reasonable it is, that our diligence should be answered to the ends we aim at, to the work we have to do, to the shortness and uncertainty of our time, and to the contrary diligence of our enemies. The ends of a Christian's desires and endeavours are so great that no human understanding on earth can comprehend them. What is so excellent, so important, or so necessary, as the glorifying of God, the salvation of our own and other men's souls, by escaping the torments of hell, and possessing the glory of heaven? And can a man be too much affected with things of such moment? Can he desire them too earnestly, or love them too strongly, or labour for them too diligently? Do not we know, that i our prayers prevail not, and our labour succeed not we are undone for ever? The work of a Christian here is very great and various. The soul must be renewed; corruptions must be mortified; custom, temptations, and worldly interests, must be conquered; flesh must be subdued; life, friends, and credit must be slighted; conscience on good grounds be quieted; and assurance of pardon and salvation attained. Though God must give us these without our merit, yet he will not give them without our earnest seeking and labour. Besides, there is much knowledge to be got, many ordinances to be used, and duties to be performed: every age, year, and day; every place we come to; every person we deal with; every change of our condition; still require the renewing of our labour; wives, children, servants, neighbours, friends, enemies, all of them call for duty from us. Judge then, whether men that have so much business lying upon their hands, should not exert themselves; and whether it be their wisdom either to delay or loiter. Time passeth on. Yet a few days, and we shall be here no more. Many diseases are ready to assault us. We that are now preaching, and hearing and talking, and walking, must very shortly be carried and laid in the dust, and there left to the worms in darkness and corruption; we are almost there already; we know not whether we shall have another sermon, or

sabbath, or hour. How active should they be, who know they have so short a space for so great a work! And we have enemies, that are always plotting and labouring for our destruction. How diligent is Satan in all kind of temptations! Therefore be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, 1 Pet. v. 8, 9. How diligent are all the ministers of Satan! False teachers, scoffers, persecutors, and our inbred corruptions, the most busy and diligent of all! Will a feeble resistance serve our turn? Should not we be more active for our own preservation, than our enemies are for our ruin?

11. It should excite us to diligence, when we consider our talents, and our mercies, our relations to God, and the afflictions he lays upon us. The talents which we have received are many and great. What people breathing on earth have had plainer instructions, or more forcible persuasions, or more constant admonitions, in season, and out of season? Sermons, till we have been weary of them; and sabbaths, till we profaned them? Excellent books in such plenty, we knew not which to read? What people have had God so near them? or have seen so much of Christ crucified before their eyes? or have had heaven and hell so opened unto them? What speed should such a people make for heaven? How should they fly that are thus winged? And how swiftly should they sail that have wind and tide to help them? A small measure of grace beseems not such a people, nor will an ordinary diligence in the work of God excuse them. All our lives have been filled with mercies. God hath mercifully poured out upon us the riches of sea and land, of heaven and earth. We are fed and clothed with mercy. We have mercies within and without. To number them is to count the stars, or the sands of the sea shore. If here be any difference betwixt hell and earth; yea, or heaven and earth; then certainly we have received mercy. If the blood of the Son of God be mercy, then we are engaged to God by mercy. Shall God think nothing too much or too good for us, and shall we think all too much that we do for him? When I

compare my slow and unprofitable life, with the frequent and wonderful mercies received, it shames me, it silences me, and leaves me inexcusable. Besides our talents and mercies, our relations to God are most endearing. Are we his children, and do we not owe him our most tender affections, and dutiful obedience? Are we the spouse of Christ, and should we not obey and love him? If he be a Father, where is his honour? And if he be a Master where is his fear? Mal. i, 6. We call him Master, and Lord, and we say well, John xiii, 13. But if our industry be not answerable to our relations, we condemn ourselves in saying we are his children or his servants. How will the hard labour, and daily toil, which servants undergo to please their masters, judge and condemn those who will not labour so hard for their great Master? Surely there is no master like him; nor can any servants expect such fruit of their labours as his servants. And if we wander out of God's way, or loiter in it, how is every creature ready to be his rod, to reduce us, or put us on! Our sweetest mercies will become our sorrows. Rather than want a rod, the Lord will make us a scourge to ourselves: Our diseased bodies shall make us groan; our perplexed minds shall make us restless; our conscience shall be as a scorpion in our bosom. And is it not easier to endure the labour, than the spur? Had we rather be still afflicted, than be up and doing? And though they that do most meet also with afflictions; yet surely, according to their peace of conscience, and faithfulness to Christ, the bitterness of their cup is abated.

12. To quicken our diligence in our work, we should also consider, what assistances we have, what principles we profess, and our certainty that we can never do too much. For our assistance in the service of God, all the world are our servants. The sun, moon, and stars, attend us with their light and influence. The earth, with all its furniture of plants and flowers, fruits, birds, and beasts; the sea, with its inhabitants; the air, the wind, the frost and snow, the heat and fire, the clouds and rain, all wait upon us while we do our work. Yea, the angels are all our ministering spirits, Heb. i, 14. Nay more, the patience of God doth wait upon us; the Lord

Jesus Christ waiteth, in the offers of his blood; the Holy Spirit waiteth, by striving with our backward hearts; besides the ministers of the gospel, who study and wait, preach and wait, pray and wait, upon careless sinners. And is it not an intolerable crime for us to trifle, while angels and men, yea, the Lord himself, stand by, and look on, and as it were, hold us the candle, while we do nothing? I beseech you, Christians, whenever you are praying, or reproving transgressors, or upon any duty, remember what assistances you have for your work, and then judge how you ought to perform it. The principles we profess, are, that God is the chief good; that all our happiness consists in his love, and therefore it should be valued and sought above all things; that he is our only Lord, and therefore chiefly to be served; that we must love him with all our heart, and soul, and strength; that our great business in the world is to glorify God, and obtain salvation. Are these doctrines seen in our practice? Or rather, do not our works deny what our words confess? But however our assistances and principles excite us to our work, we are sure we can never do too much. Could we do all we are unprofitable servants, Luke xvii, 10; much more when we are sure to fail in all. No man can obey or serve God too much. Though all superstition, or service of our own devising, may be called a being righteous overmuch; yet as long as we keep to the rule of the word, we can never be righteous too much. The world is mad with malice, when they think, that faithful diligence in the service of Christ is foolish singularity. The time is near when they will easily confess, that God could not be loved or served too much, and that no man can be too busy to save his soul. We may easily do too much for the world, but we cannot for God.

13. Let us further consider, that it is the nature of every grace to promote diligence, that trifling in the way to heaven is lost labour, that much precious time is already mispent, and that in proportion to our labour will be our recompense. See the nature and tendency of every grace. If you loved God, you would think nothing too much that you could possibly do to serve him, and please

him still more. Love is quick and impatient, active and observant. If you loved Christ, you would keep his commandments, nor accuse them of too much strictness. If you had faith, it would quicken and encourage you. If you had the hope of glory, it would, as the spring in the watch, set all the wheels of your souls a going. If you had the fear of God, it would rouse you out of your slothfulness. If you had zeal, it would inflame and eat you up. In what degree soever thou art sanctified, in the same degree thou wilt be serious and laborious in the work of God. But they that trifle lose their labour. Many, who like Agrippa, are but almost Christians, will find in the end they shall be but almost saved. If two be running in a race, he that runs slowest loses both prize and labour. A man that is lifting at a weight, if he put not sufficient strength to it, had as good put none at all. How many duties have Christians lost, for want of doing them thoroughly! Many will seek to enter in and shall not be able, Luke xiii, 24, who, if they had striven, might have been able. Therefore, put to a little more diligence and strength, that all you have done already, be not in vain. Besides, is not much precious time already lost? With some of us childhood and youth are gone; with some, their middle age also; and the time before us is very uncertain. What time have we slept, talked, and played away, or spent in worldly thoughts and cares! How little of our work is done! The time we have lost cannot be recalled; should we not then redeem and improve the little which remains? If a traveller sleep, or trifle most of the day, he must travel so much faster in the evening, or fall short of his journey's end. Doubt not but the recompense will be according to your labour. The seed which is buried and dead, will bring forth a plentiful harvest. What ever you do, or suffer, everlasting rest will pay for all. There is no repenting of labours or sufferings in heaven There not one says, "Would I had spared my pains, and prayed less, or been less strict, and done as the rest o my neighbours did." On the contrary, it will be their joy to look back upon their labours and tribulations, and to consider how the mighty power of God brought

them through all. We may all say, as Paul, I reckon, that the sufferings and labours of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us, Rom. viii, 18. We labour but for a moment, but we shall rest for ever. Who would not put forth all his strength for one hour, when for that hour's work he may be a prince while he lives? God is not unrighteous, to forget our work and labour of love, Heb. vi, 10. Will not all our tears be wiped away, and all the sorrow of our duties be then forgotten?

14. Nor does it less deserve to be considered, that striving is the divinely appointed way of salvation, that all men either do or will approve it, that the best Christians at death lament their negligence, and that heaven itself is often lost for want of striving, but is never had on easier terms. The sovereign wisdom of God has made striving necessary to salvation. Who knows the way to heaven better than the God of heaven? When men tell us we are too strict, whom do they accuse, God or us? If it were a fault, it would lie in him that commands, and not in us who obey. These are the men that ask us, whether we are wiser than all the world besides? and yet they will pretend to be wiser than God. How can they reconcile their language with the laws of God? The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force, Matt. xi, 12. Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, Luke xiii, 24. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest, Eccl. ix, 10. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, Phil. ii, 12. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i, 10. If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear, 1 Pet. iv, 18. Let them bring all the seeming reasons they can against the holy violence of the saints; this sufficeth me to confute them all, that God is of another mind, and he hath commanded me to do much more than I do; and though I could see no other reason for it, his will is reason enough. Who should make laws for us, but he that made us? And who should point out the way to heaven, but he that

must bring us thither? and who should fix the terms of salvation, but he that bestows the gift of salvation? So that let the world, the flesh, or the devil, speak against a holy laborious life, this is my answer, God hath commanded it. Nay, there never was, or will be, a man, but will approve such a life, and will one day justify the diligence of the saints. And who would not go that way, which every man shall finally applaud? True, it i now a way every where spoken against. But let me tell you, most that speak against it, in their judgments ap prove of it; and those that are now against it, will shortly be of another mind. If they come to heaven, their minds must be changed before they come there. If they go to hell, their judgment will then be altered, whether they will or not. Remember this, you that love the opinion and way of the multitude; why then will you not be of the opinion that all will be of? Why will you be of a judgment, which you are sure all of you shortly to change? O that you were but as wise in this, as those in hell! Even the best of Christians, when they come to die, exceedingly lament their negligence. They then wish, "O that I had been a thousand times more holy, more heavenly, more laborious for my soul! The world accuses me for doing too much, but my own conscience accuses me for doing too little. It is far easier bearing the scoffs of the world, than the lashes of conscience. I had rather be reproached by the devil for seeking salvation, than reproved of God for neglecting it." How do their failings thus wound and disquiet them, who have been the wonders of the world for their heavenly conversation! It is for want of more diligence, that heaven itself is often lost. When they that have heard the word, and anon with joy received it, and have done many things, and heard the ministers of Christ gladly, Matt. xiii, 20, Mark vi, 20, shall yet perish; should not this rouse us out of our security? How far hath many a man followed Christ, and yet forsook him, when all worldly interests and hopes were to be renounced! God hath resolved, that heaven shall not be had on easier terms Rest must always follow labour. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. xii, 14. Seriousness is the very thing wherein consists our sincerity. If thou art

not serious, thou art not a Christian. It is not only a high degree in Christianity, but the very life and essence of it. As fencers upon a stage differ from soldiers fighting for their lives, so hypocrites differ from serious Christians. If men could be saved without this serious diligence, they would never regard it; all the excellencies of God's ways would never entice them. But when God hath resolved, that, without serious diligence here, you shall not rest hereafter, is it not wisdom to exert ourselves to the utmost?

15. But to persuade thee, if possible, reader, to be serious in thy endeavours for heaven, let me add more considerations. As for instance: consider, God is in earnest with you; and why should not you be so with him? In his commands, his threatenings, his promises, he means as he speaks. In his judgments he is serious. Was he not so, when he drowned the world? When he consumed Sodom and Gomorrah? And when he scattered the Jews? Is it time then to trifle with God? Jesus Christ was serious in purchasing our redemption. In teaching, he neglected his meat and drink. In prayer, he continued all night. In doing good, his friends thought him beside himself. In suffering, he fasted forty days, was tempted, betrayed, spit upon, buffetted, crowned with thorns, sweat drops of blood, was crucified, pierced, died; there was no jesting in all this. And should not we be serious in seeking our own salvation? The Holy Spirit is serious in soliciting us to be happy. His motions are frequent, pressing, and importunate. He striveth with us. He is grieved, when we resist him. And should not we be serious then in obeying, and yielding to his motions? God is serious in hearing our prayers, and bestowing his mercies. He is afflicted with us. He regardeth every groan and sigh, and puts every tear into his bottle. The next time thou art in trouble, thou wilt beg for a serious regard of thy prayers. And shall we expect real mercies, when we are slight and superficial in the work of God? The ministers of Christ are serious in exhorting and instructing you. They beg of God, and of you, and long more for the salvation of your souls than for any worldly good. If they kill themselves with

their labour, or suffer martyrdom for preaching the gospel; they think their lives are well bestowed, so that they prevail for the saving your souls. And shall other men be so painful and careful for your salvation, and you be so careless and negligent of your own? How diligent and serious are all creatures in serving you! What haste makes the sun to compass the world! The fountains are always flowing for thy use; the rivers still running; spring and harvest keep their times. How hard does thy ox labour for thee from day to day! How speedily does thy horse travel with thee! And shalt thou only be negligent? Shall all these be so serious in serving thee, and thou so careless in thy service to God? The servants of the world and the devil are serious and diligent. They work, as if they could never do enough. They make haste, as if afraid of coming to hell too late. They bear down ministers, sermons, and all before them. And shall they be more diligent for damnation, than thou for salvation? Hast thou not a better master, sweeter employment, greater encouragements, and a better reward? Time was when thou wast serious thyself in serving Satan and the flesh, if it be not so yet. How eagerly didst thou follow thy sports, thy evil company, and sinful delights! And wilt thou not now be as earnest and violent for God? You are to this day in earnest about the things of this life. If you are sick, or in pain, what serious complaints do you utter! If you are poor, how hard do you labour for a livelihood! And is not the business of your salvation of far greater moment? There is no jesting in heaven or hell. The saints have a real happiness, and the damned a real misery. There are no remiss or sleepy praises in heaven, nor such lamentations in hell. All there are in earnest. When thou, reader, shalt come to death and judgment, O what deep, heart-piercing thoughts wilt thou have of eternity! Methinks I foresee thee already astonished to think how thou couldst possibly make so light of these things. Methinks I even hear thee crying out of thy stupidity and madness.

16. And now, reader, having laid down these undeniable arguments, I do, in the name of God, demand thy resolution; wilt thou yield obedience or not? I am con

fident thy conscience is convinced of thy duty. Darest thou now go on in thy common careless course, and against the plain evidence of reason, and commands of God, against the light of thy own conscience? Darest thou live as loosely, sin as boldly, and pray as seldom as before? Darest thou profane the sabbath, slight the service of God, and think of thine everlasting state as carelessly as before? Or dost thou not rather resolve to gird up the loins of thy mind, and set thyself wholly to the work of thy salvation, and break through the oppositions, and slight the scoffs and persecutions of the world, and lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset thee, and run with patience the race that is set before thee? I hope these are thy full resolutions. Yet, because I know the obstinacy of the heart of man, and because I am solicitous thy soul might live, I once more entreat thy attention to the following questions; and I command thee from God, that thou stifle not thy conscience, nor resist conviction; but answer them faithfully, and obey accordingly. If, by being diligent in godliness, you could grow rich, get honour or preferment in the world, be recovered from sickness, or live for ever in prosperity on earth; what lives would you lead, and what pains would you take in the service of God? And is not the saint's rest a more excellent happiness than all this? If it were felony to break the sabbath, neglect secret or family worship, or be loose in your lives, what manner of persons would you then be? And is not eternal death more terrible than temporal? If God usually punished with some present judgment every act of sin, as he did the lie of Ananias and Sapphira, what kind of lives would you lead? And is not eternal wrath far more terrible? If one of your acquaintance should come from the dead, and tell you that he suffered the torments of hell for those sins you are guilty of; what manner of persons would you afterwards be? How much more hould the warnings of God affright you? If you knew that this were the last day you had to live in the world, how would you spend it? And you know not but it may be your last, and are sure your last is near. If you had seen the general dissolution of the world, and all the pomp and glory of it consumed to ashes, what would

such a sight persuade thee to do? Such a sight you shall certainly see. If you had seen the judgment seat, and the books opened, and the wicked stand trembling on the left hand of the Judge, and the godly rejoicing on the right hand, and their different sentence pronounced; what persons would you have been after such a sight? This sight you shall one day surely see. If you had seen hell open and all the damned there in their endles torments; also heaven opened, as Stephen did, and al the saints there triumphing in glory; what a life would you lead after such sights? These you will see before it be long. If you had lain in hell but one year, or one day, or hour, and there felt the torments you now hear of; how seriously would you then speak of hell, and pray against it! And will you not take God's word for the truth of this, except you feel it? Or if you had possessed the glory of heaven but one year; what pains would you take, rather than be deprived of such incomparable glory? Thus I have said enough, if not to stir up the sinner to a serious working out his salvation, yet at least to silence him, and leave him inexcusable at the judgment of God. Only as we do by our friends when they are dead, and our words and actions can do them no good, yet to testify our affections for them we weep and mourn; so will I also do for these unhappy souls. It makes my heart tremble, to think how they will stand before the Lord confounded and speechless! When he shall say, "Was the world, or Satan, a better friend to you than I? Or had they done for you more than I had done? Try now whether they will save you, or recompense you for the loss of heaven, or be as good to you as I would have been." What will the wretched sinner answer to any of this? But though man will not hear, we may hope in speaking to God. "O thou that didst weep and groan in spirit over a dead Lazarus, pity these dead and senseless souls, till they are able to weep and groan in pity to themselves! As thou hast bid thy servant speak, so speak now thyself; they will hear thy voice speaking to their hearts, who will not hear mine speaking to their ears. Lord, thou hast long knocked at these hearts in vain; now break the doors and enter in.

17. Yet to show the godly why they, above all men,

should be laborious for heaven, I desire to ask them, What manner of persons should those be, whom God hath chosen to be vessels of mercy; who have felt the smart of their negligence, in their new birth, in their troubles of conscience, in their doubts and fears, and in other sharp afflictions; who have often confessed their sin of negligence to God in prayer; who have bound themselves to God by so many covenants? What manner of persons should they be, who are near to God as the children of his family; who have tasted such sweetness in diligent obedience; who are many of them so uncertain what shall everlastingly become of their souls? What manner of persons should they be in holiness, whose sanctification is so imperfect; whose lives and duties are so important to the saving or destroying a multitude of souls; and on whom the glory of the great God so much depends? Since these things are so, I charge thee, Christian, in thy Master's name, to consider, and resolve the question, What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? And let thy life answer the question as well as thy tongue.

CHAPTER VIII.

How to discern our title to the saint's rest.

The folly of men in not inquiring after a title to the saint's rest; 2. and their cause for terror, as long as they are destitute of a title. 3. Self examination is urged upon them; 4. from the possibility of arriving at a certainty; 5–9. from the hindrances which will be thrown in our way by Satan, sinners, our own hearts, and many other causes; 10. from considering how easy, common, and dangerous it is to be mistaken; that trying will not be so painful as the neglect; that God will soon try us, and that to try ourselves will be profitable; 11. and therefore the reader is entreated no longer to delay the trial. 12. Then directions are given how to try; 13. and marks of trial are added, particularly, 14. Do we make God our chief good? 15. Do we heartily accept of Christ for our Lord and Saviour? 16–19. The chapter concludes with illustrating the great importance of these two marks.

1. Is there such a glorious rest so near at hand? And hall none enjoy it but the people of God? What mean most of the world then, to live so contentedly without assurance of their interest in this rest, and neglect the trying of their title to it? When the Lord hath so fully

opened the blessedness of that kingdom, which none but obedient believers shall possess; and so fully expressed those torments, which the rest of the world must eternally suffer: methinks they that believe this to be certainly true, should never be at any quiet in themselves, till they were fully assured of their being heirs to the kingdom. Lord, what a strange madness is this, that men who know they must presently enter upon unchangeable joy or pain, should yet live as uncertain what shall be their doom, as if they never heard of any such state; yea, and live as quietly and merrily in this uncertainty, as if all were made sure, and there were no danger! Are they awake or asleep? What do they think on? Where are their hearts? If they have but a weighty suit at law, how careful are they to know whether it will go for or against them: if they were to be tried for their lives at an earthly bar, how careful would they be to know whether they should be saved or condemned, especially if their care might surely save them! If they be dangerously sick, they will inquire of the physician, what think you, sir, shall I escape, or not? But in the business of their salvation, they are content to be uncertain. If you ask most men a reason of the hope that is in them, they will say, "Because God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners," and the like general reasons, which any man in the world may give as well as they: But put them to prove their interest in Christ, and in the saving mercy of God, and they can say nothing to the purpose. If God or man should say to them, what case is thy soul in, man? Is it regenerate, sanctified and pardoned, or not? He would be ready to say, as Cain of Abel, "I know not, am I my soul's keeper? I hope well; I trust God with my soul; I shall speed as well as other men do; I thank God, I never made any doubt of my salvation." Thou hast cause to doubt, because thou never didst doubt; and yet more, because thou hast been careless in thy confidence. What do thy expressions discover but a wilful neglect of thy own salvation? As a ship master that should let his vessel alone, and say, "I will venture it among the rocks, and waves, and winds; I will trust God with it; it will speed as well as other

vessels." What horrible abuse of God is this, to pretend to trust God, to cloak their own negligence! If thou didst really trust God, thou wouldst also be ruled by him, and trust him in his own appointed way. He requires thee to give diligence to make thy calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i, 10, and so trust him. He hath marked thee out a way in Scripture, by which thou art charged to search and try thyself, and mayst arrive at a certainty. Were he not a foolish traveller, that would hold on his way, when he does not know whether he be right or wrong, and say, "I hope I am right; I will go on and trust God?" Art not thou guilty of this folly in thy travels to eternity? Not considering that a little serious inquiry, whether thy way be right, might save thee a great deal of labour, which thou bestowest in vain, and must undo again, or else thou wilt miss of salvation, and undo thyself.

2. How canst thou think or speak of the great God without terror, as long as thou art uncertain whether he be thy Father, or thy enemy, and knowest not but all his perfections may be employed against thee? Or of Jesus Christ, when thou knowest not whether his blood has purged thy soul; whether he will condemn or acquit thee in judgment; nor whether he is the foundation of thy happiness, or a stone of stumbling to break thee and grind thee to powder? How canst thou open the Bible, and read a chapter, but it should terrify thee? Methinks every leaf should be to thee as Belshazzar's writing on the wal', except only that which draws thee to try and reform. If thou readest the promises, thou knowest not whether they shall be fulfilled to thee. If thou readest threatenings, for any thing thou knowest, thou reades thy own sentence. No wonder thou art an enemy to plain preaching, and say of the minister, as Ahab of the prophet, I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. How canst thou without terror join in prayer? When thou receivest the sacraments, thou knowest not whether it be thy bane or bliss. What comfort canst thou find in thy friends, and honours, and houses, and lands, till thou knowest thou hast the love of God with them, and shall have rest with him when

thou leavest them? Offer a prisoner, before he knows his sentence, either music, or clothes, or preferment: what are they to him, till he knows he shall escape for his life? for if he knows he must die the next day, it will be small comfort to die rich or honourable. Methinks it should be so with thee, till thou knowest thy eternal state. When thou liest down to take thy rest, methinks the uncertainty of thy salvation should keep thee waking, or amaze thee in thy dreams, and trouble thy sleep. Doth it not grieve thee to see the people of God so comfortable in their way to glory, when thou hast no good hope of ever enjoying it thyself? How canst thou think of thy dying hour? Thou knowest it is near, and there is no avoiding it, nor any medicine found out that can prevent it. If thou shouldst die this day, (and who knows what a day may bring forth,) thou art not certain whether thou shalt go to heaven or hell. And canst thou be merry till thou art got out of this dangerous state? What shift dost thou make to preserve thy heart from horror, when thou rememberest the great judgment day, and everlasting flames? When thou hearest of it, dost thou not tremble, as Felix? If the keepers shook, and became as dead men, when they saw the angel come and roll back the stone from Christ's sepulchre; how canst thou think of living in hell with devils, till thou hast got some well-grounded assurance that thou shalt escape it? Thy bed is very soft, or thy heart is very hard, if thou canst sleep soundly in this uncertain case.

3. If this general uncertainty of the world about their salvation were remediless, then must it be borne as other unavoidable miseries. But, alas! the common cause is wilful negligence. Men will not be persuaded to use the remedy. The great means to conquer this uncertainty, is self examination, or the serious and diligent trying of a man's heart and state by the rule of Scripture. Either men understand not the nature and use of this duty, or else they will not be at the pains to try. Go through a congregation of a thousand men, and how few of them shall you meet with, that ever bestowed one hour in all their lives in a close examination of their title to heaven! Ask thy own conscience, reader, when was the time, and

where was the place, that ever thou solemnly tookest thy heart to task, as in the sight of God, and didst examine it by Scripture, whether it be renewed or not; whether it be set most on God or the creatures, on heaven or earth; and when didst thou follow on this examination till thou hadst discovered thy condition, and passed sentence on thyself accordingly? But because this is a work of so high importance, and so commonly neglected, I will therefore show, that it is possible by trying to come to a certainty; what hinders men from trying and knowing their state; then offer motives to examine; and directions; together with some marks out of Scripture, by which you may try, and certainly know, whether you are the people of God or not.

4. Scripture shows that certainty of salvation may be attained, and ought to be laboured for: when it tells us so frequently, that the saints before us have known their justification and future salvation: when it declares, that whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life; which it would be in vain to declare, if we cannot know ourselves to be believers or not: when it makes such a wide difference between the children of God, and the children of the devil: when it bids us give diligence to make our calling and election sure; and earnestly urges us to examine, prove, know ourselves, whether we be in the faith, and whether Jesus Christ be in us, except we be reprobates: also when its precepts require us to rejoice always, to call God our Father, to live in his praises, to love Christ's appearing, to wish that he may come quickly, and to comfort ourselves with the mention of it. But who can do any of these heartily, that is not in some measure sure that he is the child of God?

5. Among the many hindrances which keep men from self examination, we cannot doubt but Satan will do his part. If all the power he hath, or all the means and instruments he can employ, can do it, he will be sure, above all duties, to keep you from this. He is loath the godly should have that joy, assurance, and advantage against corruption, which the faithful performance of self examination would procure them. As for the ir

godly, he knows that if they should once examine, they would find out his deceits and their own danger, and so be very likely to escape him. How could he get so many millions to hell willingly, if they knew they were going thither? And how could they avoid knowing it, if they did but thoroughly try; having such a clear light and sure rule in the Scripture to discover it? If the snare be not hid, the bird will escape it. Satan knows how to angle for souls better than to show them the hook an line, or fright them away with a noise, or with his own appearance. Therefore he labours to keep them from a searching ministry; or to keep the minister from helping them to search; or to take off the edge of the word, that it may not pierce and divide; or to turn away their thoughts; or to possess them with prejudice. Satan knows when the minister hath provided a searching sermon, fitted to the state and necessity of a hearer; and therefore he will keep him away that day, if it be possible; or cast him into a sleep; or steal away the word by the cares and talk of the world; or some way prevent its operation.

6. Another great hindrance to self examination arises from wicked men. Their examples; their merry company and discourse; their continually insisting on worldly concerns; their raillery and scoffs at godly persons; also their persuasions, allurements, and threats, are each of them exceeding great temptations to security. God doth scarce ever open the eyes of a poor sinner, to see that his way is wrong, but presently there is a multitude of Satan's apostles ready to deceive and settle him again in the quiet possession of his former master. "What," say they, "do you make a doubt of your salvation, who have lived so well, and done nobody any harm? God is merciful, and if such as you shall not be saved, God help a great many! What do you think of all your forefathers? And what will become of all your friends and neighbours that live as you do? Will they all be damned. Come, come, if you hearken to these preachers, they will drive you out of your wits. Are not all men sinners? And did not Christ die to save sinners? Never trouble your head with these thoughts, and you shall do

well." O how many thousands have such charms kept asleep in deceit and security, till death and hell have awakened them! The Lord calls to the sinner, and tells him, The gate is strait, the way is narrow, and few find it: try and examine, give diligence to make sure. The world cries, Never doubt, never trouble yourselves with these thoughts. In this strait, sinner, consider it is Christ, and not your forefathers, or neighbours, or friends, that must judge you at last; and if Christ condemn you, these cannot save you: therefore common reason may tell you, that it is not from the words of ignorant men, but from the word of God, you must fetch your hopes of salvation. When Ahab would inquire among the multitude of flattering prophets, it was his death. They can flatter men into the snare, but they cannot tell how to bring them out. Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience; be not ye therefore partakers with them, Eph. v, 6, 7.

7. But the greatest hindrances are in men's own hearts. Some are so ignorant, that they know not what self examination is, nor what a minister means when he persuadeth them to try themselves: or they know not that there is any necessity for it; but think every man is bound to believe that his sins are pardoned, whether it be true or false, and that it is a great fault to make any question of it: or they do not think that assurance can be attained: or that there is any great difference between one man and another, but that we are all Christians, and therefore need not trouble ourselves any further: or at least they know not wherein the difference lies. They have as gross an idea of regeneration as Nicodemus had. Some will not believe, that God will ever make such a difference betwixt men in the life to come, and therefore will not search themselves whether they differ here. Some are so stupified, say what we can to them, that they lay it not to heart, but give us the hearing, and there is an end. Some are so possessed with self love and pride, that they will not so much as suspect they are in danger, like a proud tradesman, who scorns the prudent advice of casting up his books: as fond parents

will not believe or hear any evil of their children. Some are so guilty, that they dare not try; and yet they dare venture on a more dreadful trial. Some are so in love with sin, and so dislike the way of God, that they dare not try their ways, lest they be forced from the course they love, to that which they loathe. Some are so resolved never to change their present state, that they neglect examination as a useless thing. Before they will seek a new way, when they have lived so long, and gone so far, they will put their eternal state to the venture, come of it what will. Many men are so busy in the world, that they cannot set themselves to the trying their title to heaven. Others are so clogged with slothfulness of spirit, that they will not be at the pains of an hour's examination of their own hearts. But the most common and dangerous impediment is that false faith and hope, commonly called presumption, which bears up the hearts of the greatest part of the world, and so keeps them from suspecting their danger.

8. And if a man should break through all these hindrances, and set upon the duty of self examination, yet assurance is not presently attained. Too many deceive themselves in their inquiries after it, through one or other of the following causes. There is such confusion and darkness in the soul of man, especially of an unregenerate man, that he can scarcely tell what he doth, or what is in him. As in a house, where nothing is in its proper place, it will be difficult to find what is wanted; so it is in the heart where all things are in disorder. Most men accustom themselves to be strangers at home, and too little observe the temper and motions of their own hearts. Many are resolved what to judge before they try. Like a bribed judge, who examines as if he would judge uprightly, when he is previously resolved which way the cause shall go. Men are partial in their own cause; ready to think their great sins small, and their small sins none; their gifts of nature to be the work of grace, and to say, All these have I kept from my youth; I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing. Most men search but by the halves. If it will not easily and quickly be done, they are discouraged and leave off.

They try themselves by false marks and rules: not knowing wherein the truth of Christianity doth consist; some looking beyond, and some short of the Scripture standard. And frequently they miscarry in this work by attempting it in their own strength. As some expect the Spirit should do it without them, so others attempt it themselves, without seeking or expecting the help of the Spirit. Both these will certainly miscarry in their assurance.

9. Some other hindrances keep even true Christians from comfortable certainty. As for instance: the weakness of grace. Small things are hardly discerned. Most Christians content themselves with a small measure of grace, and do not follow on to the spiritual strength and manhood. The chief remedy for such would be to follow on their duty, till their grace be increased. Wait upon God in the use of his prescribed means, and he will undoubtedly bless you with increase. O that Christians would bestow most of that time in getting more grace, which they bestow in anxious doubtings whether they have any or none; and lay out those serious affections in praying for more grace, which they bestow in fruitless complaints! I beseech thee, Christian, take this advice as from God; and then, when thou believest strongly, and lovest fervently, thou canst no more doubt of thy faith and love, than a man that is very hot can doubt of his warmth, or that a man that is strong and lusty can doubt of his being alive. Christians hinder their own comfort by looking more at signs, which tell them what they are, than at precepts, which tell them what they should do. As if their present case must needs be their everlasting case; and if they be now pardoned, there were no remedy. Were he not mad, that would lie weeping because he is not pardoned, when his prince stands by all the while offering him a pardon, and persuading him to accept of it? Justifying faith, Christian, is not thy persuasion of God's special love to thee, but by accepting Christ to make thee lovely. It is far better to accept Christ as offered, than spend so much time in doubting whether we have Christ or not. Another cause of distress to Christians is, their mistaking assu

rance for the joy that sometimes accompanies it. As if a child should take himself for a son no longer than while he sees the smiles of his father's face, or hears the comfortable expressions of his mouth: and as if the father ceased to be a father, whenever he ceased those smiles and speeches. The trouble of souls is also increased by their not knowing the ordinary way of God's conveying comfort. They think they have nothing to do but to wait when God will bestow it. But they must know that the matter of their comfort is in the promises, and thence they must fetch it as often as they expect it, by daily and diligently meditating upon the promises, and in this way they may expect the Spirit will communicate comfort to their souls. The joy of the promises, and the joy of the Holy Ghost, are one. Add to this, their expecting a greater measure of assurance than God usually bestows. As long as they have any doubting, they think they have no assurance. They consider not that there are many degrees of certainty. While they are here, they shall know but in part. Add, also, their deriving their comfort at first from insufficient grounds. This may be the case of a gracious soul, who hath better grounds, but doth not see them. As an infant hath life before he knoweth it, and many misapprehensions of himself and other things, yet it will not follow that he hath no life. So when Christians find a flaw in their first comforts, they are not to judge it a flaw in their safety. Many come under doubting, through the exceeding weakness of their natural parts. Many honest hearts have weak heads; and know not how to perform the work of self trial. They will acknowledge the premises, and yet deny the apparent conclusion. If God do not some other way supply the defect of their reason, I see not how they should have clear and settled peace. One great and too common cause of distress is, the secret maintaining some known sin. This abates the degree of our graces, and so makes them more undiscernable. It obscureth that which it destroyeth not; for it beareth such sway, that grace is not in action, nor seems to stir, nor is scarce heard to speak for the noise of this corruption. It puts out, or dimmeth the eye of the soul, and stupi-

fies it, that it can neither see nor feel its own condition. But especially it provokes God to withdraw himself, his comforts, and the assistance of his Spirit, without which we may search long enough before we have assurance. God hath made a separation between sin and peace. As long as thou dost cherish thy pride, thy love of the world, the desires of the flesh, or any unchristian practice, thou expectest comfort in vain. If any man setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a minister, or to God, to inquire for comfort; instead of comforting him, God will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols, Ezek. xiv, 3–9. Another very great and common cause of the want of comfort is, when grace is not kept in constant and lively exercise. The way of painful duty is the way of fullest comfort. Peace and comfort are Christ's great encouragements to faithfulness and obedience; and therefore, though our obedience does not merit them, yet they usually rise and fall with our diligence in duty. As prayer must have faith and fervency to procure it success, besides the blood and intercession of Christ, so must all other parts of our obedience. If thou grow seldom, and customary, and cold in duty, especially in thy secret prayers to God, and yet findest no abatement in thy joys, I cannot but fear thy joys are either carnal or diabolical. Besides grace is never apparent and sensible to the soul, but while it is in action; therefore want of action must cause want of assurance. And the action of the soul upon such excellent objects, naturally bringeth consolation with it. The very act of loving God in Christ is inexpressibly sweet. The soul that is best furnished with grace, when it is not in action, is like a lute well stringed and tuned, which while it lieth still, maketh no more music than a common piece of wood; but when it is handled by a skilful musician, the melody is delightful. Some degree of comfort follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, and as beams and influence issue from the sun. A man that is cold, should labour till heat be excited; so he that wants assurance, must not stand still, but exercise his graces, till his doubts vanish. The want of consolation

in the soul is also very commonly owing to bodily melancholy. It is no more wonder for a conscientious man, under melancholy, to doubt, and fear, and despair, than for a sick man to groan, or a child to cry when it is chastised. Without the physician in this case, the labours of the divine are usually in vain. You may silence, but you cannot comfort them. You may make them confess they have some grace, and yet cannot bring them to the comfortable conclusion. All the good thoughts of their state which you can possibly help them to, are seldom above a day or two old. They cry out of sin, and the wrath of God, when the chief cause is in their bodily distemper.

10. As for motives to persuade to the duty of self examination, I entreat you to consider the following. To be deceived about your title to heaven is very easy. Many are now in hell, that never suspected any falsehood in their hearts, that excelled in worldly wisdom, that lived in the clear light of the gospel, and even preached against the negligence of others. To be mistaken in this great point is also very common. It is the case of most in the world. In the old world, and in Sodom, we find none that were in any fear of judgment. Almost all men among us verily look to be saved; yet Christ tells us, there be few that find the strait gate, and narrow way, which leadeth unto life, Matt. vii, 14. And if such multitudes are deceived, should not we search the more diligently, lest we should be deceived as well as they? Nothing is more dangerous than to be thus mistaken. If the godly judge their state worse than it is, the consequences of this mistake will be sorrowful; but the mischief flowing from the mistake of the ungodly is unspeakable. It will exceedingly confirm them in the service of Satan. It will render ineffectual the means that should do them good. It will keep a man from compassionating his own soul. It is in a case of the greatest moment, where everlasting salvation or damnation is to be determined. And if you mistake till death, you are undone for ever. Seeing then the danger is so great, what wise man would not follow the search of his heart both night and day, till he were assured of his

safety. Consider how small the labour of this duty is, in comparison with that sorrow which followeth its neglect. You can endure to toil and sweat from year to year, to prevent poverty; and why not spend a little time in self examination, to prevent eternal misery? By neglecting this duty, you can scarce do Satan a greater pleasure, nor yourself a greater injury. It is the grand design of the devil, in all his temptations, to deceive you, and keep you ignorant of your danger, till you feel the everlasting flames; and will you join with him to deceive yourself? If you do this for him, you do the greatest part of his work. And hath he deserved so well of you, that you should assist him in such a design as your damnation? The time is nigh when God will search you. If it be but in this life by affliction, it will make you wish that you had tried and judged yourselves, that you might have escaped the judgment of God. It was a terrible voice to Adam, Where art thou? Hast thou eaten of the tree? And to Cain, Where is thy brother? Men consider not in their hearts that I, saith the Lord, remember all their wickedness; now their own doings have beset them about, they are before my face, Hosea vii, 2. Consider also, what would be the sweet effects of this self examination. If thou be upright and godly, it will lead thee straight towards assurance of God's love; if thou be not, though it will trouble thee at the present, yet it will tend to thy happiness, and at length lead thee to the assurance of that happiness. Is it not a desirable thing to know what shall befall us hereafter? especially what shall befall our souls? and what place and state we must be in for ever? And as the very knowledge itself is desirable, how much greater will the comfort be of that certainty of salvation! What sweet thoughts wilt thou have of God! All that greatness and justice, which is the terror of others, will be thy joy. How sweet may be thy thoughts of Christ, and the blood he hath shed, and the benefits he hath procured! How welcome will the word of God be to thee, and how beautiful the very feet of those that bring it! How sweet will be the promises when thou art sure they are thine own! The very threatenings will occasion thy comfort,

to remember thou hast escaped them. What boldness and comfort mayst thou then have in prayer, when thou canst say, Our Father, in full assurance! It will make the Lord's supper a refreshing feast to thy soul. It will multiply the sweetness of every common mercy. How comfortably mayst thou then undergo all afflictions? How will it sweeten thy forethoughts of death and judgment, of heaven and hell! How lively will it make thee in the work of the Lord, and how profitable to all around thee! What vigour will it infuse into all thy graces and affections, kindle thy repentance, inflame thy love, quicken thy desires, and confirm thy faith, be a fountain of continual rejoicing, overflow thy heart with thankfulness, raise thee high in the delightful work of praise help thee to be heavenly minded, and render thee persevering in all! All these sweet effects of assurance would make thy life a heaven upon earth.

11. Though I am certain these motives have weight of reason in them, yet I am jealous, reader, lest you lay aside the book, as if you had done, and never set yourself to the practice of the duty. The case in hand is of the greatest moment, whether thou shalt everlastingly live in heaven or hell? I here request thee, in behalf of thy soul, nay, I charge thee, in the name of the Lord, that thou defer no longer, but take thy heart to task in good earnest, and think with thyself, "Is it so easy, so common, and so dangerous to be mistaken? Are there so many wrong ways? Is the heart so deceitful? Why then do I not search into every corner, till I know my state? Must I so shortly undergo the trial at the bar of Christ? And do I not presently try myself? What a case were I in if I should then miscarry? May I know by a little diligent inquiry now? And do I stick at the labour?" But perhaps thou wilt say, "I know not how to do it." In that I am now to give thee directions; but, alas! it will be in vain, if thou art not resolved to practise them. Wilt thou, therefore, before thou goest any further, here promise before the Lord, to set thyself upon the speedy performance of the duty, according to the directions I shall lay down from the word of God? I demand nothing unreasonable or impossible. It is but

to bestow a few hours to know what shall become of thee for ever. If a neighbour, or friend, desire but an hour's time of thee in conversation, or business of any thing in which thou mayst be of service, surely thou wouldst not deny it; how much less shouldst thou deny this to thyself in so great an affair? I pray thee take from me this request, as if, in the name of Christ, I presented it to thee on my knees; and I will betake me on my knees to Christ again, to beg that he will persuade thy heart to the duty.

12. The directions how to examine thyself are such as these: Empty thy mind of all other cares and thoughts, that they may not distract or divide thy mind. This work will be enough at once, without joining others with it. Then fall down before God in hearty prayer, desiring the assistance of his Spirit, to discover to thee the plain truth of thy condition, and to enlighten thee in the whole progress of this work. Make choice of the most convenient time and place. Let the place be the most private; and the time, when you have nothing to interrupt you; and, if possible, let it be the present time. Have in readiness, either in memory or writing some Scriptures, containing the description of the saints, and the gospel terms of salvation; and convince thyself thoroughly of their infallible truth. Proceed then to put the question to thyself. Let it not be, whether there be any good in thee at all? Nor whether thou hast such or such a degree or measure of grace? But, whether such or such a saving grace be in thee in sincerity or not? If thy heart draw back from the work, force it on. Lay thy command upon it. Let reason interpose, and use its authority. Yea, lay the command of God upon it, and charge it to obey upon pain of his displeasure. Let conscience also do its office, till thy heart be excited to the work. Nor let thy heart trifle away the time, when it should be diligently at the work. Do as the psalmist, my spirit made diligent search. He that can prevail with his own heart, shall also prevail with God. If, after all thy pains, thou art not resolved, then seek out for help, go to one that is godly, experienced, able, and faithful, and tell him thy case, and desire his best advice. Use

the judgment of such a one, as that of a physician for thy body; though this can afford thee no full certainty, yet it may be a great help to stay and direct thee. But do not make it a pretence to put off thy own self examination: only use it as one of the last remedies, when their own endeavours will not serve. When thou hast discovered thy true state, pass sentence on thyself accordingly; either that thou art a true Christian, or that thou art not. Pass not this sentence rashly, nor with self flattery, nor from melancholy terrors; but deliberately, truly, and according to thy conscience convinced by Scripture and reason. Labour to get thy heart affected with its condition, according to the sentence passed on it. If graceless, think of thy misery. If renewed and sanctified, think what a blessed state the Lord hath brought thee into. Pursue these thoughts till they have left their impression on thy heart. Write this sentence, at least in thy memory: "At such a time, upon thorough examination, I found my state to be thus, or thus." Such a record will be very useful to thee hereafter. Trust not to this one discovery, so as to try no more: nor let it hinder thee in the daily search of thy ways; neither be discouraged, if the trial must be often repeated. Especially take heed, if unregenerate, not to conclude of thy future state by the present. Do not say, "because I am ungodly, I shall die so; because I am a hypocrite, I shall continue so." Do not despair. Nothing but thy unwillingness can keep thee from Christ, though thou hast hitherto abused him, and dissembled with him.

13. Now let me add some marks by which you may try your title to the saint's rest. I will only mention these two; taking God for the chief good; and heartily accepting Christ for thy only Saviour and Lord.

14. Every soul that hath a title to this rest, doth place his chief happiness in God. This rest consisteth in the full and glorious enjoyment of God. He that maketh not God his chief good, and ultimate end, is in heart a pagan and a vile idolater. Let me ask then, dost thou truly account it thy chief happiness to enjoy the Lord in glory, or dost thou not? Canst thou say, the Lord is my portion? Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there

is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. If thou be an heir of rest, it is thus with thee. Though the flesh will be pleading for its own delights, and the world will be creeping into thine affections; yet in thy ordinary, settled, prevailing judgment and affections, thou prefer est God before all things in the world. Thou makest him the very end of thy desires and endeavours. The very reason why thou hearest and prayest, and desirest to live on earth, is chiefly this, that thou mayst seek the Lord, and make sure of thy rest. Though thou dost not seek it so zealously as thou shouldst; yet hath it the chief of thy desires and endeavours, so that nothing else is desired or preferred before it. Thou wilt think no labour or suffering too great to obtain it. And though the flesh may sometimes shrink, yet thou art resolved and contented to go through all. Thy esteem for it will also be so high, and thy affections to it so great, that thou wouldst not exchange thy title to it, and hopes of it, for any worldly good whatsoever. If God should set before thee an eternity of earthly pleasure on one hand, and the saint's rest on the other, and bid thee take thy choice; thou wouldst refuse the world and choose this rest. But if thou art yet unsanctified, then thou dost in thy heart prefer thy worldly happiness before God; and though thy tongue may say, that God is thy chief good, yet thy heart doth not so esteem him. For the world is the chief end of thy desires and endeavours. Thy very heart is set upon it. Thy greatest care and labour is to maintain thy credit, or fleshly delights. But the life to come hath little of thy care or labour. Thou didst never perceive so much excellency in that unseen glory of another world, as to draw thy heart after it, and set thee a labouring heartily for it. The little pains thou bestowest that way, is but in the second place. God hath but the world's leavings, only that time and labour thou canst spare from the world, or those few, cold and careless thoughts, which follow thy constant, earnest, and delightful thoughts of earthly things. Neither wouldst thou do any thing at all for heaven, if thou knewest how to keep the world. But lest thou shouldst be turned into hell, when thou canst keep the world no longer, there-

fore thou wilt do something. For the same reason thou thinkest the way of God too strict, and will not be persuaded to the constant labour of walking according to the gospel rule; and when it comes to the trial, and thou must forsake Christ, or thy worldly happiness, then thou wilt venture heaven rather than earth, and so wilfully deny thy obedience to God. And certainly, if God would but give thee leave to live in health and wealth for eve. on earth, thou wouldst think it a better state than rest Let them seek for heaven that would, thou wouldst think this thy chief happiness. This is thy case, if thou art yet an unregenerate person, and hast no title to the saint's rest.

15. And as thou takest God for thy chief good, so thou dost heartily accept of Christ for thy only Saviour and Lord to bring thee to this rest. The former mark was the sum of the first and great command of the law, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. This second mark is the sum of the command of the gospel, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. And the performance of these two is the whole of godliness and Christianity. This mark is but a definition of faith. Dost thou heartily consent that Christ alone shall be thy Saviour? and no farther trust to thy duties and works, than as means appointed in subordination to him? not looking at them as in the least measure able to satisfy the curse of the law, or as a legal righteousness, or any part of it? but content to trust thy salvation on the redemption made by Christ? Art thou also content to take him for thy only Lord and King, to govern and guide thee by his laws and Spirit? And to obey him, even when he commandeth the hardest duties, and those which most cross the desires of the flesh? Is it thy sorrow when thou breakest thy resolution herein? and thy joy when thou keepest closest in obedience to him? Wouldst thou not change thy Lord and Master for all the world? Thus it is with every tru Christian. But if thou be an hypocrite, it is far other wise. Thou mayst call Christ thy Lord and thy Sa viour; but thou never foundest thyself so lost without him, as to drive thee to seek him and trust him, and lay

thy salvation on him alone. At least thou didst never heartily consent that he should govern thee as thy Lord, nor resign up thy soul and life to be ruled by him, nor take his word for the law of thy thoughts and actions. It is likely thou art content to be saved from hell by Christ when thou diest; but in the mean time he shall command thee no farther than will stand with thy credit, or pleasure, or other worldly ends. And if he would give thee leave, thou hadst far rather live after the world and flesh, than after the word and Spirit. And though thou mayst now and then have a motion or purpose to the contrary; yet this that I have mentioned is the ordinary desire and choice of thy heart. Thou art therefore no true believer in Christ; for though thou confess him in words, yet in works thou dost deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. This is the case of those that shall be shut out of the saint's rest.

16. Observe, it is the consent of your hearts or wills, which I especially lay down to be inquired after. I do not ask, whether thou be assured of salvation? nor, whether thou canst believe that thy sins are pardoned, and that thou art beloved of God in Christ? These are no parts of justifying faith, but excellent fruits of it, and they that receive them, are comforted by them; but perhaps thou mayst never receive them whilst thou livest, and yet be a true heir of rest. Do not say then, "I cannot believe that my sins are pardoned, or that I am in God's favour, and therefore I am no true believer." This is a most mistaken conclusion. The question is whether thou dost heartily accept of Christ, that thou mayst be pardoned, reconciled to God, and so saved? Dost thou consent that he shall be thy Lord who hath bought thee, and that he shall bring thee to heaven in his own way? This is justifying, saving faith, and the mark by which thou must try thyself. Yet still observe, that all this consent must be hearty and real, not feigned or with reservations. It is not saying, as that dissembling son, I go sir; and went not. If any have more of the government of thee than Christ, thou art not his disciple. I am sure these two marks are such as every Christian hath,

and none but sincere Christians. O that the Lord would now persuade thee to the close performance of this self trial! That thou mayst not tremble with horror of soul, when the Judge of all the world shall try thee; but be so able to prove thy title to rest, that the prospect and approach of death and judgment may raise thy spirits, and fill thee with joy.

17. On the whole, as ever Christians would have comforts that will not deceive them, let them make it the great labour of their lives to grow in grace, to strengthen and advance the interest of Christ in their souls, and to weaken and subdue the interest of the flesh. Deceive not yourselves with a persuasion, that Christ hath done all, and left you nothing to do. To overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil; and in order to that, to stand always armed upon our watch, and valiantly and patiently to fight it out, is of great importance to our assurance and salvation. Indeed, it is so great a part of our baptismal vow, that he who performeth it not, is no more than a nominal Christian. Not to every one that presumptuously believeth, but to him that overcometh, will Christ give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it: he shall eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and shall not be hurt of the second death. Christ will confess his name before his Father, and before his angels, and make him a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall go no more out, and will write upon him the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from his God, and will write upon him his new name. Yea, he will grant to him to sit with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father on his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, Rev. ii, 7, 11, 17, iii, 5, 12, 21, 22.

CHAPTER IX.

The duty of the people of God to excite others to seek this rest.

.. The author laments that Christians do so little to help others to obtain the saint's rest. 2. Shows the nature of this duty; particularly, 3. In having our hearts affected with the misery of our brethren's souls, 4–6. In taking all opportunities to instruct them in the way of salvation, 7. In promoting their profit by public ordinances; 8. Assigns various reasons why this duty is so much neglected, 9. And answers some objections against it: 10–13. Then urges to the discharge of it by several considerations, 14. Addressed to such as have knowledge, learning, and utterance, 15. Those that are acquainted with sinners, 16. Physicians that attend dying men, 17. Persons of wealth and power, 18. Ministers, 19. And those that are intrusted with the care of children or servants, 20. The chapter concludes with an earnest request to Christian parents to be faithful to their trust.

1. Hath God set before us such a glorious prize as the saint's rest, and made us capable of such inconceivable happiness? Why then do not all the children of this kingdom exert themselves more to help others to the enjoyment of it? Alas, how little are poor souls about us beholden to most of us! We see the glory of the kingdom, and they do not: we see the misery of those that are out of it, and they do not: we see them wandering quite out of the way, and know, if they hold on, they can never come there; and they themselves discern it not. And yet we will not seriously show them their danger and error, and help to bring them into the way, that they may live. Alas, how few Christians are there to be found, that set themselves with all their might to save souls! No thanks to us, if heaven be not empty, and if the souls of our brethren perish not for ever. Considering how important this duty is, to the glory of God, and the happiness of men, I will show how it is to be performed; why it is so much neglected; and then offer some considerations to persuade to it.

2. The duty of helping others to discern their title to the saint's rest, doth not mean, that every man should turn a public preacher, or that any should go beyond the bounds of their particular callings; much less does it consist in promoting a party spirit; and least of all in speaking against men's faults behind their backs, and be silent before their faces. This duty is of another nature

and consists of the following things; in having our hearts affected with the misery of our brethren's souls, in taking all opportunities to instruct them in the way of salvation, and in promoting their profit by public ordinances.

3. Our heart must be affected with the misery of our brethren's souls. We must be compassionate towards them, and yearn after their recovery and salvation. If we earnestly longed after their conversion, and our hearts were solicitous to do them good, it would set us on work, and God would usually bless it.

4. We must take all opportunities we possibly can to instruct them how to attain salvation. If the person be ignorant, labour to make him understand the chief happiness of man; how far he was once possessed of it; the covenant God then made with him; how he broke it; what penalty he incurred; and what misery he brought himself into: teach him his need of a Redeemer; how Christ did mercifully interpose, and bear the penalty; what the new covenant is; how men are drawn to Christ; and what are the riches and privileges which believers have in him. If he is not moved by these things, then show him the excellency of the glory he neglects; the extremity and eternity of the torments of the damned; the justice of enduring them for wilfully refusing grace; the certainty, nearness, and terrors of death and judgment; the vanity of all things below; the sinfulness of sin; the preciousness of Christ; the necessity of regeneration, faith, and holiness, and the true nature of them. If after all you find him entertaining false hopes, then urge him to examine his state; show him the necessity of doing so; help him in it; nor leave him till you have convinced him of his misery and remedy. Show him how vain and destructive it is to join Christ and his duties, to compose his justifying righteousness. Yet be sure to draw him to the use of all means; such as hearing and reading the word, calling upon God, and associating with the godly; persuade him to forsake sin, avoid all temptations to sin, especially evil companions, and to wait patiently on God in the use of means, as the way in which God will be found.

5. But because the manner of performing this work is

of great moment, observe therefore these rules. Enter upon it with right intentions. Aim at the glory of God in the person's salvation. Do it not to get a name, or esteem to thyself, or to bring men to depend upon thee, or to get thee followers, but in obedience to Christ, in imitation of him, and tender love to men's souls. Do not as those, who labour to reform their children or servants from such things as are against their own profit or humour, but never seek to save their souls in the way which God hath appointed. Do it speedily. As you would not have them delay their return, do not you delay to seek their return. While you are purposing to teach and help him, the man goes deeper in debt; wrath is heaping up; sin taking root; custom fastens him; temptations to sin multiply; conscience grows seared; the heart hardened; the devil rules; Christ is shut out; the Spirit is resisted; God is daily dishonoured; his law violated; he is without a servant, and that service from him which he should have; time runs on; death and judgment are at the door; and what if the man die, and drop into hell, while you are purposing to prevent it? If in the case of his bodily distress, you must not say to him, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee, Heb. iii, 13, how much less may you delay the succour of his soul! That physician is no better than a murderer, who negligently delayeth till his patient be dead, or past cure. Lay by excuses then, and all lesser business, and exhort one another daily; while it is called to-day; lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Let your exhortation proceed from compassion and love. To jeer and scoff, to rail and vilify, is not a likely way to reform men, or convert them to God. Go to poor sinners with tears in your eyes, that they may see you believe them to be miserable, and that you unfeignedly pity their case. Deal with them with earnest humble entreatings. Let them perceive it is the desire of your hearts to do them good; that you have no other end but their everlasting happiness; and that it is your sense of their danger, and your love to their souls, that forceth you to speak; even because you know the terrors of the Lord, and for fear

you should see them in eternal torments. Say to them, "Friend, you know I seek no advantage of my own: the method to please you, and keep your friendship, were to soothe you in your way, or let you alone; but love will not suffer me to see you perish, and be silent. I seek nothing at your hands, but that which is necessary to your own happiness. It is yourself that will have the gain and comfort, if you come to Christ." If we were thus to go to every ignorant, wicked neighbour, what blessed fruit should we quickly see! Do it with all possible plainness and faithfulness. Do not make their sins less than they are, nor encourage them in a false hope. If you see the case dangerous, speak plainly; "Neighbour, I am afraid God hath not yet renewed your soul; I doubt you are not yet recovered from the power of Satan to God; I doubt you have not chosen Christ above all, nor unfeignedly taken him for your sovereign Lord. If you had, surely you durst not so easily disobey him, nor neglect his worship in your family, and in public: you could not so eagerly follow the world, and talk of nothing but the things of the world. If you were in Christ, you would be a new creature; old things would be passed away, and all things would become new. You would have new thoughts, new talk, new company, new endeavours, and new conversation: certainly without these you can never be saved: you may think otherwise, and hope better as long as you will, but your hopes will all deceive you, and perish with you." Thus must you deal faithfully with men, if ever you intend to do them good. It is not in curing men's souls, as in curing their bodies, where they must not know their danger lest it hinder the cure. They are here agents in their own cure, and if they know not their misery, they will never bewail it, nor know their need of a Saviour. Do it also seriously, zealously, and effectually. Labour to make men know that heaven and hell are not matters to be played with, or passed over with a few careless thoughts "Is it most certain that one of these days thou shalt be in everlasting joy or torment; and doth it not awaken thee? Are there so few that find the way of life? So many that go the way of death? Is it so hard to escape?

So easy to miscarry? and yet do you sit still and trifle? What do you mean? The world is passing away: its pleasures, honours, and profits are fading and leaving you: eternity is a little before you: God is just and jealous: his threatenings are true: the great day will be terrible: time runs on: your life is uncertain: you are far behind hand: your case is dangerous: if you die to-morrow, how unready are you! With what terror will your souls go out of your bodies! And do you yet loiter? Consider, God is all this while waiting your leisure: his patience beareth: his long suffering forbeareth: his mercy entreateth you: Christ offers you his blood and merits: the Spirit is persuading: conscience is accusing: Satan waits to have you: this is your time: now or never. Had you rather burn in hell, than repent on earth? have devils your tormentors, than Christ your governor? Will you renounce your part in God and glory, rather than renounce your sins? O friends, what do you think of these things? God hath made you men; do not renounce your reason where you should chiefly use it." Alas, it is not a few dull words between jest and earnest, between sleep and awake, that will rouse a dead-hearted sinner. If a house be on fire, you will not make a cold oration on the nature and danger of fire; but will run, and cry, fire, fire. To tell a man of his sins as softly as Eli did his sons; or reprove him, as gently as Jehoshaphat did Ahab, let not the king say so, usually doth as much harm as good. Loathness to displease men makes us undo them.

6. Yet, lest you run into extremes, I advise you to do it with prudence and discretion. Choose the fittest season. Deal not with men when they are in passion, or where they will take it for a disgrace. When the earth is soft, the plough will enter. Take a man when he is under affliction, or newly impressed under a sermon. Christian faithfulness requires us, not only to do good when it falls in our way, but to watch for opportunities. Suit yourself also to the quality and temper of the person. You must deal with the ingenious, more by argument than persuasion. There is need of both to the ignorant. The affections of the convinced should be chiefly excited. The obstinate must be sharply reproved.

The timorous must be dealt with tenderly. Love, plainness, and seriousness, take with all; but words of terror some can scarce bear. Use also the aptest expressions. Unseemly language makes the hearers loathe the food they should live by; especially if they be men of curious ears and carnal hearts. Let all your reproofs and exhortations be backed with the authority of God. Let sinners be convinced that you speak not of your own head. Turn them to the very chapter and verse where their sin is condemned, and their duty commanded. The voice of man is contemptible, but the voice of God is awful and terrible. They may reject your words, that dare not reject the words of the Almighty. Be frequent with men in this duty of exhortation. If we are always to pray and not to faint, because God will have us importunate with himself; the same course, no doubt, will be most prevailing with men. Therefore we are commanded to exhort one another daily, Heb. iii, 13, and with all long suffering, 2 Tim. iv, 2. The fire is not brought always out of the flint at one stroke; nor men's affections kindled at the first exhortation. And if they were, yet if they be not followed, they will soon grow cold again. Follow sinners with your loving and earnest entreaties, and give them no rest in their sin. This is true charity, the way to save men's souls, and will afford you comfort upon review. Strive to bring all your exhortations to an issue. If we speak the most convincing words, but all our care is over with our speech, we shall seldom prosper in our labours: but God usually blesses their labours, whose very heart is set upon the conversion of their hearers, and who are therefore inquiring after the success of their work. If you reprove a sin, cease not till the sinner promises you to leave it, and avoid the occasions of it. If you are exhorting to a duty, urge for a promise to set upon it presently. If you would draw men to Christ, leave not, till you have made them confess the misery of their present unregenerate state and the necessity of Christ, and of a change, and have promised you to fall close to the use of means. O that all Christians would take this course with all their neighbours that are enslaved to sin, and strangers to Christ!

Once more, be sure your example exhort as well as your words. Let them see you constant in all the duties you persuade them to. Let them see in your lives that superiority to the world, which your lips recommend. Let them see by your constant labours for heaven, that you indeed believe what you would have them believe. A holy and heavenly life is a continual pain to the consciences of sinners around you, and continually solicits them to change their course.

7. Besides the duty of private admonition, you must endeavour to help men to profit by the public ordinances. In order to that, endeavour to procure for them faithful ministers, where they are wanting. How shall they hear without a preacher, Rom. x, 14: improve your interest and diligence to this end, till you prevail. Extend your purses to the utmost. How many souls may be saved by the ministry you have procured! It is a higher and nobler charity, than relieving their bodies. What abundance of good might great men do, if they would support in academical education, such youth as they have first carefully chosen for their ingenuity and piety, till they should be fit for the ministry! And when a faithful ministry is obtained, help poor souls to receive the fruit of it. Draw them constantly to attend it. Remind them often what they have heard, and if it be possible, let them hear it repeated in their families, or elsewhere. Promote their frequent meeting together, besides publicly in the congregation; not as a separate church, but as a part of the church more diligent than the rest in redeeming time, and helping the souls of each other heavenward. Labour also to keep the ordinances and ministry in esteem. No man will be much wrought on by that which he despiseth. An apostle says, We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; nd to esteem them very highly in love for their work's ake, 1 Thess. v, 12, 13.

8. Let us now a little inquire, what may be the causes of the gross neglect of this duty; that the hindrances being discovered, may the more easily be overcome. One hindrance is, men's own sin and guilt. They have

not themselves been ravished with heavenly delights: how then should they draw others so earnestly to seek them? They have not felt their own lost condition, nor their need of Christ, nor the renewing work of the Spirit; how then can they discover these to others? They are guilty of the sins they should reprove, and this makes them ashamed to reprove. Another is, a secret infidelity prevailing in men's hearts. Did we verily believe, that all the unregenerate and unholy shall be eternally tormented, how could we hold our tongues, or avoid bursting into tears, when we look them in the face? Especially when they are our near and dear friends? Thus doth secret unbelief consume the vigour of each grace and duty. O Christians, if you did verily believe, that your ungodly neighbours, wife, husband, or child, should certainly lie for ever in hell, except they be thoroughly changed before death shall snatch them away, would not this make you address them day and night till they were persuaded? Were it not for this cursed unbelief, our own and our neighbours' souls would gain more by us than they do. These attempts are also much hindered by our want of charity and compassion for men's souls. We look on miserable souls, and pass by, as the priest and Levite by the wounded man. What though the sinner, wounded by sin, and captivated by Satan, do not desire thy help himself; yet his misery cries aloud. If God had not heard the cries of our miseries, before he heard the cry of our prayers, and been moved by his own pity, before he was moved by our importunity, we might long have continued the slaves of Satan. You will pray to God for them, to open their eyes, and turn their hearts; and why not endeavour their conversion, if you desire it? And if you do not desire it, why do you ask it? Why do you not pray them to consider and return as well as pray God to convert and turn them? If you should see your neighbour fallen into a pit, and should pray to God to help him out, but neither put forth your hand to help him, nor once direct him to help himself, would not any man censure you for cruelty and hypocrisy? It is as true of the soul as the body. If any man seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up

his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? Or what love hath he to his brother's soul? We are also hindered by a base, man pleasing disposition. We are so desirous to keep in credit and favour with men, that it makes us most unconscionably neglect our own duty. He is a foolish and unfaithful physician, that will let a sick man die for fear of troubling him. If our friends are distracted, we please them in nothing that tends to their hurt. And yet when they are beside themselves in point of salvation, and in their madness posting on to damnation, we will not stop them for fear of displeasing them. How can we be Christians, that love the praise of men more than the praise of God? For if we seek to please men, we shall not be the servants of Christ. It is common to be hindered by sinful bashfulness. When we should shame men out of their sins, we are ourselves ashamed of our duties. May not these sinners condemn us, when they blush not to swear, be drunk, or neglect the worship of God; and we blush to tell them of it, and persuade them from it? Bashfulness is unseemly in cases of necessity. It is not a work to be ashamed of, to obey God, in persuading men from their sins to Christ. Reader, hath not thy conscience told thee of thy duty many a time, and put thee on to speak to poor sinners; and yet thou hast been ashamed to open thy mouth, and so let them alone to sink or swim? O read and tremble, Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels, Mark viii, 38. An idle and impatient spirit hindereth us. It is an ungrateful work, and sometimes makes men our enemies. Besides, it seldom succeeds at the first, except it be followed on. You must be long teaching the ignorant, and persuading the obstinate. We consider not what patience God used towards us, when we were in our sins. Wo to us, if God had been as impatient with us, as we are with others. Another hindrance is self seeking. All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's, Phil. ii, 21, and their brethren's. With many, pride is a great impediment. If

it were to speak with a great man, and it would not displease him, they would do it. But to go among the poor, and take pains with them in their cottages; where is the person that will do it? Many will rejoice in being instrumental to convert a gentleman; and they have good reason; but overlook the multitude, as if the souls of all were not alike to God. Alas, these men little consider how low Christ stooped to us! Few rich, and noble, and wise are called. It is the poor that receive the glad tidings of the gospel! And with some their ignorance o the duty hindereth them from performing it. Either they know it not to be a duty, or at least not to be their duty. If this be thy case, reader, I am in hope thou art now acquainted with thy duty, and will set upon it.

9. Do not object to this duty, that you are unable to manage an exhortation, but either set those on the work who are more able, or faithfully and humbly use the small ability you have, and tell them as a weak man may do, what God says in his word. Decline not the duty, because it is your superior who needs advice and exhortation. Order must be dispensed with in cases of necessity. Though it be a husband, a parent, a minister, you must teach him in such a case. If parents were in want, children must relieve them. If a husband be sick, the wife must fill up his place in family affairs. If the rich are reduced to beggary, they must receive charity. If the physician be sick, somebody must look to him. So the meanest servant must admonish his master, and the child his parent, and the wife her husband, and the people their minister; so that it be done when there is real need, and with all possible humility, modesty, and meekness. Do not say, "This will make us all preachers;" for every good Christian is a teacher, and hath a charge of his neighbour's soul. Every man is a physician, when a regular physician cannot be had, and when the hurt is so small that any man may relieve it; and in the same cases every man must be a teacher Do not despair of success. Cannot God give it? And must it not be by means? Do not plead, it will only be casting pearls before swine. When you are in danger to be torn in pieces, Christ would have you forbear; but

what is that to you that are in no such danger? As long as they will hear, you have encouragement to speak and may not turn them off as contemptible swine. Say not, "It is a friend on whom I much depend, and by telling him his sin and misery, I may lose his love, and be undone." Is his love more to be valued than his safety? or thy own benefit by him, than the salvation of his soul? or wilt thou connive at his damnation, because he is thy friend? Is that thy best requital of his friendship? Hadst thou rather he should burn in hell for ever, than thou shouldst lose his favour, or the maintenance thou hast from him?

10. But that all who fear God may be excited to do their utmost to help others to this blessed rest, let me entreat you to consider the following motives. As for instance: not only nature, but especially grace, disposes the soul to be communicative of good. Therefore to neglect this work is a sin, both against nature and grace. Would you not think him unnatural, that would suffer his children or neighbours to starve in the streets, while he had provision at hand? And is not he more unnatural, that will let them eternally perish, and not open his mouth to save them? An unmerciful cruel man is a monster to be abhorred of all. If God had bid you give them all your estates, or lay down your lives, to save them, you would surely have refused, when you will not bestow a little breath to save them. Is not the soul of a husband, or wife, or child, or neighbour, worth a few words? Cruelty to men's bodies is a most damnable sin; but to their souls much more, as the soul is of greater worth than the body, and eternity than time. Little know you what many a soul may now be feeling in hell, who died in their sins, for want of your faithful admonition. Consider what Christ did towards the saving of souls. He thought them worth his blood; and shall we not think them worth our breath? Will you not do a little, where Christ has done so much? Consider what fit objects of pity ungodly souls are. They are dead in trespasses and sins, have not hearts to feel their miseries, nor to pity themselves. If others do not pity them, they will have no pity; for it is the nature of their

disease to make them pitiless to themselves, yea, their own most cruel destroyers. Consider it was once thy own case. It was God's argument to the Israelites, to be kind to strangers, because themselves had been strangers in the land of Egypt. So should you pity them that are strangers to Christ, and to the hopes and comforts of the saints, because you were once strangers to them yourselves. Consider your relation to them. I is thy neighbour, thy brother, whom thou art bound to love as thyself. He that loveth not his brother whom he seeth daily, doth not love God whom he never saw. And doth he love his brother, that will see him go to hell, and never hinder him?

11. Consider what a load of guilt this neglect lays upon thy own soul. Thou art guilty of the murder and damnation of all those souls whom thou dost thus neglect; and of every sin they now commit; and of all the dishonour done to God thereby; and of all those judgments which their sins bring upon the town or country where they live. Consider what it will be, to look upon your poor friends in eternal flames, and to think that your neglect was a great cause of it. If you should there perish with them, it would be no small aggravation of your torment. If you be in heaven, it would sure be a sad thought, were it possible that any sorrow could dwell there, to hear a multitude of poor souls cry out for ever, "O, if you would but have told me plainly of my sin and danger, and set it home, I might have escaped all this torment, and been now in rest!" What a sad voice will this be! Consider what a joy it will be in heaven, to meet those there, whom you have been the means to bring thither. To see their faces, and join with them for ever in the praises of God, whom you were the happy instruments of bringing to the knowledge and obedience of Jesus Christ! Consider how many souls you may have drawn into the way of damnation, or hardened in it. We have had, in the days of our ignorance, our companions in sin, whom we enticed or encouraged And doth it not become us, to do as much to save men as we have done to destroy them? Consider how diligent are all the enemies of these poor souls to draw them

to hell. The devil is tempting them day and night; their inward lusts are still working for their ruin; the flesh is still pleading for its delights; their old companions are increasing their dislike of holiness. And if nobody be diligent in helping them to heaven, what is like to become of them?

12. Consider how deep the neglect of this duty will wound, when conscience is awakened. When a man comes to die, conscience will ask him, "What good hast thou done in thy life time? The saving of souls is the greatest good work; what hast thou done towards it? How many hast thou dealt faithfully with?" I have oft observed, that the consciences of dying men very much wounded them for this omission. For my own part, when I have been near death, my conscience hath accused me more for this than for any sin: it would bring every ignorant profane neighbour to my remembrance, to whom I never made known their danger. It would tell me, "Thou shouldst have gone to them in private, and told them plainly of their desperate danger, though it had been when thou shouldst have eaten or slept, if thou hadst no other time." Conscience would remind me how at such, or such a time, I was in company with the ignorant, or was riding by the way with a wilful sinner, and had a fit opportunity to have dealt with him, but did not; or at least did it to little purpose. The Lord grant I may better obey conscience while I have time, that it may have less to accuse me of at death! Consider what a seasonable time you now have for this work. There are times in which it is not safe to speak, it may cost you your liberties or your lives. Besides, your neighbours will shortly die, and so will you. Speak to them therefore while you may. Consider, though this is a work of the greatest charity, yet every one of you may perform it. The poorest as well as the rich. Every one hath a tongue to speak to a sinner. Once more, consider the happy consequences of this work, where it is faithfully done. You may be instrumental of saving souls, for which Christ came down and died, and in which the angels of God rejoice. Such souls will bless you here and hereafter. God will have much glory

by it. The church will be multiplied and edified by it. Your own souls will enjoy more improvement and vigour in a divine life, more peace of conscience, more rejoicing in spirit. Of all the personal mercies that I ever received, next to the love of God in Christ to my own soul, I most joyfully bless him for the plentiful success of my endeavours upon others. O what fruits then might I have seen, if I had been more faithful! I know we need to be very jealous of our deceitful hearts in this point, lest our rejoicing should come from our pride. Naturally we would have the praise of every good work ascribed to ourselves: yet to imitate our Father in goodness and mercy, and to rejoice in the degree of them we attain to, is the duty of every child of God. I therefore tell you my own experience, to persuade you, that if you did but know what a joyful thing it is, you would follow it night and day through the greatest discouragements.

13. Up then, every man that hath a tongue, and is a servant of Christ, and do something of your Master's work. Why hath he given you a tongue, but to speak in his service? And how can you serve him more eminently, than in saving souls? He that will pronounce you blessed at the last day, and invite you to the kingdom prepared for you, because you fed him, and clothed him, and visited him, in his poor members, will surely pronounce you blessed for so great a work as bringing souls to his kingdom. He that saith, the poor you have always with you, hath left the ungodly always with you, that you might still have matter to exercise your charity upon. If you have the hearts of Christians or of men, let them yearn towards your ignorant, ungodly neighbours. Say as the lepers of Samaria, We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace. Hath God had so much mercy on you, and will you have no mercy on your poor neighbours? But as this duty belongs to all Christians, so especially to some according as God hath called them to it, or qualified them for it. To them therefore, I will more particularly address the exhortation.

14. God especially expects this duty at your hands to whom he hath given more learning and knowledge, and

endued with better utterance, than your neighbours. The strong are made to help the weak; and those that see must direct the blind. God looketh for this faithful improvement of your parts and gifts, which, if you neglect, it were better you had never received them; for they will but aggravate your condemnation, and be as useless to your own salvation, as they were to others.

15. All those that are particularly acquainted with some ungodly men, and that have peculiar interest in them, God looks for this duty at your hands. Christ himself did eat and drink with publicans and sinners; but it was only to be their physician, and not their companion. Who knows but God gave you interest in them to this end, that you might be the means of their recovery? They that will not regard the words of a stranger may regard a brother, or sister, or husband, or wife, or near friend: besides that the bond of friendship engageth you to more kindness and compassion than ordinary.

16. Physicians that are much about dying men, should in a special manner make conscience of this duty. It is their peculiar advantage, that they are at hand; that they are with men in sickness and dangers, when the ear is more open, and the heart less stubborn than in time of health; and that men look upon their physician as a person in whose hand is their life; or at least who may do much to save them; and therefore they will the more regard his advice. You that are of this honourable profession, do not think this a work besides your calling, as if it belonged to none but ministers; except you think it beside your calling to be compassionate, or to be Christians. O help therefore to fit your patients for heaven! And whether you see they are for life or death, teach them both how to live and die, and give them some physic for their souls, as you do for their bodies. Blessed be God, that very many of the chief physicians of this age, have, by their eminent piety vindicated their profession from the common imputation of atheism and profaneness.

17. Men of wealth and authority, and that have many dependants, have excellent advantages for this duty. O what a world of good might lords and gentlemen do, if they had but hearts to improve their influence over

others! Have you not all your honour and riches from God? Doth not Christ say, unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required? If you speak to your dependants for God and their souls, you may be regarded, when even a minister shall be despised. As you value the honour of God, your own comfort, and the salvation of souls, improve your influence over tenants and neighbours; visit their houses; see whether they worship God in their families; and take all opportunities to press them to their duty. Despise them not. Remember God is no respecter of persons. Let men see that you excel others in piety, compassion and diligence in God's work, as you do in the riches and honour of the world. I confess you will by this means be singular, but then you will be singular in glory; for few of the mighty and noble are called.

18. As for the ministers of the gospel, it is the very work of their calling, to help others to heaven. Be sure to make it the main end of your studies and preaching. He is the able, skilful minister, that is best skilled in the art of instructing, convincing, persuading, and consequently winning souls; and that is the best sermon that is best in these. When you seek not God, but yourselves, God will make you the most contemptible of men. It is true of your reputation, what Christ says of your life, He that loveth it, shall lose it. Let the vigour of your persuasions show, that you are sensible on how weighty a business you are sent. Preach with that seriousness and fervour, as men that believe their own doctrine, and that know their hearers must be prevailed with, or be damned. Think not that all your work is in your studies and pulpit. You are shepherds, and must know every sheep, and what is their disease, and mark their strayings, and help to cure them and fetch them home. Learn of Paul, not only to teach your people publicly, but from house to house. Inquire how they grow in knowledge and holiness, and on what grounds they build their hopes of salvation, and whether they walk uprightly, and perform the duties of their several relations. See whether they worship God in their families, and teach them how to do it. Be familiar with

them, that you may maintain your interest in them, and improve it all for God. Know of them how they profit by public teaching. If any too little savour the things of the Spirit, let them be pitied, but not neglected. If any walk disorderly, recover them with diligence and patience. If they be ignorant, it may be your fault as much as theirs. Be not asleep while the wolf is waking Deal not slightly with any. Some will not tell their people plainly of their sins, because they are great men; and some because they are godly; as if none but the poor and the wicked should be dealt plainly with. Yet labour to be skilful and discreet, that the manner may answer to the excellency of the matter. Every reasonable soul hath both judgment and affection; and every rational, spiritual sermon, must have both. Study and pray, and pray and study, till you are become workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the truth; that your people may not be ashamed, nor weary in hearing you. Let your conversation be teaching, as well as your doctrine. Be as forward in a holy and heavenly life, as you are in pressing others to it. Let your discourse be edifying and spiritual. Suffer any thing, rather than the gospel and men's souls should suffer. Let men see that you use not the ministry only for a trade to live by; but that your hearts are set upon the welfare ot souls. Whatsoever meekness, humility, condescension, or self denial you teach them from the gospel, teach it them also by your undissembled example. Study and strive after unity and peace. If ever you would promote the kingdom of Christ, and your people's salvation, do it in a way of peace and love. It is as hard a thing to maintain in your people a sound understanding, a tender conscience, a lively, gracious, heavenly frame of spirit, and an upright life, amidst contention, as to keep your candle lighted in the greatest storms. Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

19. All you whom God hath entrusted with the care of children or servants, I would also persuade to this great work of helping others to the heavenly rest. Consider what plain and pressing commands of God require

this at your hands. These words thou shalt teach diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, Deut. vi, 6, 7. Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it, Prov. xxii, 6. Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Eph. vi, 4. Joshua resolved, that he and his house would serve the Lord, Joshua xxiv, 15. And God himself says of Abraham, I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, Gen. xviii, 19. Consider it is a duty you owe your children in point of justice. From you they received the defilement and misery of their nature; and therefore you owe them all possible help for their recovery. Consider how near your children are to you. They are parts of yourselves. If they prosper when you are dead, you take it as if you lived and prospered in them; and should you not be of the same mind for their everlasting rest? Otherwise you will be witnesses against your own souls. Your care, and pains, and cost for their bodies, will condemn you for your neglect of their precious souls. Yea, all the brute creatures may condemn you. Which of them is not tender of their young? Consider, God hath made your children your charge, and your servants too. Every one will confess they are the minister's charge. And have not you a greater charge of your own families, than any minister can have of them? Doubtless at your hands God will require the blood of their souls. It is the greatest charge you were ever entrusted with, and wo to you, if you suffer them to be ignorant or wicked for want of your instruction or correction. Consider what work there is for you in their dispositions and lives. There is not one sin but thousands. They are hereditary diseases, bred in their natures. The things you must teach them are contrary to the interests and desires of their flesh. May the Lord make you sensible what a work and charge lieth upon you! Consider what sorrows you prepare for yourselves by the neglect of your children. If they prove thorns in your eyes, they are

of your own planting. If you should repent and be saved, is it nothing to think of their damnation; and yourselves the occasion of it? But if you die in your sin, how will they cry out against you in hell, "All this was long of you; you should have taught us better, and did not; you should have restrained us from sin, and corrected us, but did not!" What an addition will such outcries be to your misery! On the other side, think what a comfort you may have, if you be faithful in this duty. If you should not succeed, you have freed your own souls, and have peace in your own consciences. If you do, the comfort is inexpressible, in their love and obedience, their supplying your wants, and delighting you in all your remaining path to glory. Yea, all your family may fare the better for one pious child or servant. But the greatest joy will be, when you shall say, Lord, here am I, and the children thou hast given me; and shall joyfully live with them for ever. Consider how much the welfare of church and state depends on this duty. Good laws will not reform us, if reformation begin not at home. This is the cause of all our miseries in church and state, even the want of a holy education of children. I also entreat parents to consider, what excellent advantages they have for saving their children. They are with you while they are tender and flexible. You have a twig to bend, not an oak. None in the world have such interests in their affections as you have. You have also the greatest authority over them. Their whole dependance is upon you for a maintenance. You best know their temper and inclinations. And you are ever with them, and can never want opportunities: especially you, mothers, remember this, who are more with your children, while young, than their fathers. What pains are you at for their bodies! What do you suffer to bring them into the world! And will you not be at as much pains for the saving of their souls? Your affections are tender; and will it not move you to think of their perishing for ever? I beseech you, for the sake of the children of your bowels, teach them, admonish them, watch over them, and give them no rest till you have brought them to Christ.

20. I shall conclude with this earnest request to al Christian parents that read these lines; that they would have compassion on the souls of their poor children, and be faithful to the great trust that God hath put on them If you cannot do what you would for them, yet do what you can. Both church and state, city and country, groan under neglect of this weighty duty. Your children know not God, nor his laws, but take his name in vain, and slight his worship, and you neither instruct them nor correct them; and therefore God corrects both them and you. You are so tender of them, that God is the less tender, both of them and you. Wonder not if God make you smart for your children's sins; for you are guilty of all they commit, by your neglect of your duty to reform them. Will you resolve therefore to set upon this duty, and neglect it no longer? Remember Eli. Your children are like Moses in the bulrushes, ready to perish if they have not help. As ever you would not be charged before God as murderers of their souls, nor have them cry out against you in everlasting fire, see that you teach them how to escape it, and bring them up in holiness, and the fear of God. I charge every one of you upon your allegiance to God, as you will very shortly answer the contrary at your peril, that you will neither refuse nor neglect this most necessary duty. If you are not willing to do it, now you know it to be so great a duty, you are rebels, and not true subjects of Jesus Christ. If you are willing, but know not how, I will add a few words of direction to help you. Lead them, by your examples, to prayer, reading, and other religious duties. Inform their understandings. Store their memories. Rectify their will. Quicken their affections. Keep tender their consciences. Restrain their tongues, and teach them gracious speech. Reform and watch over their outward conversation. To these ends, get them Bibles and pious books, and see that they read them Examine them often what they learn: especially spend the Lord's day in this work, and suffer them not to spend it in sports or idleness. Show them the meaning of what they read or learn. Keep them out of evil company, and acquaint them with the godly, and fail not to make them

learn their catechism. Especially show them the necessity, excellency, and pleasure of serving God; and labour to fix all upon their hearts.

CHAPTER X.

The saint's rest is not to be expected on earth.

1. In order to show the sin and folly of expecting rest here; 2. the reasonableness of present afflictions is considered; 3. that they are the way to rest, 4. keep us from mistaking our rest, from losing our way to it, 6. quicken our pace towards it, 7. chiefly incommode our flesh, 8, 9. and under them the sweetest foretastes of rest are often enjoyed: 10. How unreasonable to rest in present enjoyments; 11. that 'tis idolatry; 12. that it contradicts God's end in giving them; 13. is the way to have them refused, withdrawn, or imbittered; 14. that to be suffered to take up our rest here is the greatest curse; 15. that it is seeking rest where it is not; 16. that the creatures without God, would aggravate our misery; 17. and all this is confirmed by experience. 18. The author laments that this is nevertheless a most common sin. 19–23. How unreasonable our unwillingness to die, and possess the saint's rest, is largely considered. 24. The author apologizes for saying so much on this last head.

1. We are not yet come to our resting place. Doth it remain? How great then is our sin and folly to seek and expect it here! Where shall we find the Christian that deserves not this reproof? We would all have continual prosperity, because it is easy and pleasing to the flesh; but we consider not the unreasonableness of such desires. And when we enjoy convenient houses, goods, lands and revenues; or the necessary means God hath appointed for our spiritual good; we seek rest in these enjoyments. Whether we are in an afflicted or prosperous state, it is apparent, we exceedingly make the creature our rest. Do we not desire creature enjoyments more violently, when we want them, than we desire God himself? Do we not delight more in the possession of them, than in the enjoyment of God? And if we lose them, doth it not trouble us more than our loss of God? Is it not enough, hat they are refreshing helps in our way to heaven, but they must also be made our heaven itself? Christian reader, I would as willingly make thee sensible of this sin, as of any sin in the world, if I could tell how to do

it; for the Lord's greatest quarrel with us is in this point. In order to this, I most earnestly beseech thee to consider, the reasonableness of present affliction, and the unreasonableness of resting in present enjoyment; as also of our unwillingness to die, that we may possess eternal rest.

2. To show the reasonableness of present afflictions, consider, they are the way to rest; they keep us from mistaking our rest, and from losing our way to it; they quicken our pace towards it; they chiefly incommode our flesh; and under them God's people have often the sweetest foretastes of their rest.

3. Consider that labour and trouble are the common way to rest, both in the course of nature and grace. Can there possibly be rest without weariness? Do you not travail and toil first, and rest after? The day for labour is first, and then follows the night for rest. Why should we desire the course of grace to be perverted, any more than the course of nature? It is an established decree, that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God, Acts xiv, 22. And that if we suffer, we shall also reign with Christ, 2 Tim. ii, 12. And what are we, that God's statutes should be reversed for our pleasure?

4. Afflictions are exceeding useful to us, to keep us from mistaking our rest. A Christian's motion towards heaven is voluntary, and not constrained. Those means therefore are most profitable, which help his understanding and will. The most dangerous mistake of our souls, is, to take the creature for God, and earth for heaven. What warm, affectionate, eager thoughts have we of the world, till afflictions cool and moderate them? Afflictions speak convincingly, and will be heard when preachers cannot. Many a poor Christian is sometimes bending his thoughts to wealth, or flesh pleasing, or applause; and so loses his relish of Christ, and the joy above; till God break in upon his riches, or children, or conscience, or health, and break down his mountain which he though so strong: and then, when he lieth in Manasseh's fetters, or is fastened to his bed with pining sickness, the world is nothing, and heaven is something. If our dear Lord

did not put these thorns under our head, we should sleep out our lives, and lose our glory.

5. Afflictions are also God's most effectual means to keep us from losing our way to our rest. Without this hedge of thorns, on the right hand and left, we should hardly keep the way to heaven. If there be but one gap open, how ready are we to find it, and turn out at it! When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud, how doth sickness or other affliction reduce us! Every Christian, as well as Luther, may call affliction one of his best school masters; and with David may say, Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word, Psalm cxix, 67. Many thousand recovered sinners may cry, "O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful losses! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted!" Not only the green pastures, and still waters, but the rod and staff, they comfort us. Though the word and Spirit do the main work, yet suffering so unbolts the door of the heart, that the word hath easier entrance.

6. Afflictions likewise serve to quicken our pace in the way to our rest. It were well if mere love would prevail with us, and that we were rather drawn to heaven, than driven. But seeing our hearts are so bad, that mercy will not do it; it is better be put on with the sharpest scourge, than loiter like the foolish virgins, till the door is shut. O what difference is there betwixt our prayers in health and in sickness; betwixt our repentings in prosperity and adversity! Alas! if we did not sometimes feel the spur, what a slow pace would most of us hold towards heaven! Since our vile nature requires it, why should we be unwilling that God should do us good by sharp means? Judge, Christian, whether thou dost not go more watchfully and speedily in the way to heaven in thy sufferings, than in thy more pleasing and prosperous state.

7. Consider further, it is but the flesh that is chiefly troubled and grieved by affliction. In most of our sufferings the soul is free, unless we ourselves wilfully afflict it. "Why then, O my soul, dost thou side with this flesh, and complain, as it complaineth? It should be thy

work to keep it under, and bring it into subjection, and if God do it for thee, shouldst thou be discontented? Hath not the pleasing of it been the cause of almost all thy spiritual sorrows? Why then may not the displeasing of it farther thy joys? Must not Paul and Silas sing, because their feet are in the stocks? Their spirits were not imprisoned. Ah, unworthy soul! is this thy thanks to God for preferring thee so far before thy body? When it is rotting in the grave, thou shalt be a companion o. he perfected spirits of the just. In the mean time, hast hou not consolation which the flesh knows not of? Murmur not then at God's dealings with thy body: if it were for want of love to thee, he would not have dealt so by all his saints. Never expect thy flesh should truly expound the meaning of the rod. It will call love, ha tred; and say God is destroying, when he is saving. It is the suffering party, and therefore not fit to be the judge." Could we once believe God, and judge of his dealings by his word, and by their usefulness to our souls, and reference to our rest, and could we stop our ears against all the clamours of the flesh, then we should have a truer judgment of our afflictions.

8. Once more consider, God seldom gives his people so sweet a foretaste of their future rest, as in their deep afflictions. He keeps his most precious cordials for the time of our greatest faintings and dangers. He gives them, when he knows they are needed, and will be valued; and when he is sure to be thanked for them, and his people rejoiced by them. Especially when our sufferings are more directly for his cause, then he seldom fails to sweeten the bitter cup. The martyrs have possessed the highest joys. When did Christ preach such comforts to his disciples, as when their hearts were sorrowful at his departure? When did he appear among them, and say, Peace be unto you, but when they were shut up for fear of the Jews? When did Stephen see heaven opened, but when he was giving up his life for the testimony of Jesus? Is not that our best state, wherein we have most of God? Why else do we desire to come to heaven? If we look for a heaven of fleshly delights, we shall find ourselves mistaken. Conclude then, that

affliction is not so bad a state for a saint in his way to rest. Are we wiser than God? Doth he not know what is good for us as well as we! Or is he not as careful of our good, as we of our own? Wo to us, if he were not much more so! and if he did not love us better than we love either him or ourselves!

9. Say not, "I could bear any other affliction but this." If God had afflicted thee where thou canst bear it, thy idol would neither have been discovered nor removed. Neither say, "If God would deliver me out of it, I could be content to bear it." Is it nothing that he hath promised it shall work for thy good? Is it not enough that thou art sure to be delivered at death? Nor let it be said, "If my affliction did not disable me for duty, I could bear it." It doth not disable thee for that duty which tendeth to thy own personal benefit, but is the greatest quickening help thou canst expect. As for the duty to others, it is not thy duty when God disables thee. Perhaps thou wilt say, "The godly are my afflicters; if it were ungodly men, I could easily bear it." Whoever is the instrument, the affliction is from God, and the deserving cause thyself; and is it not better to look more to God and thyself? Didst thou not know that the best men are still sinful in part? Do not plead, "If I had but that consolation, which you say God reserveth for suffering times, I should suffer more contentedly; but I do not perceive any such thing." The more you suffer for righteousness' sake, the more of this blessing you may expect; and the more you suffer for your own evil doing, the longer it will be before that sweetness comes. Are not the comforts you desire neglected or resisted? Have your afflictions wrought kindly with you, and fitted you for comfort? It is not mere suffering that prepares you for comfort, but the success and fruit of sufferings upon your hearts.

10. To show the unreasonableness of resting in present enjoyments, consider, it is idolizing them; it contradicts God's end in giving them; it is the way to have them refused, withdrawn, or imbittered; to be suffered to take up our rest here is the greatest curse; it is seeking rest where it is not to be found; the creatures, without God,

would aggravate our misery; and to confirm all this, we may consult our own and others' experience.

11. It is gross idolatry to make any creature or means our rest. To be the rest of the soul, is God's own prerogative. As it is apparent idolatry to place our rest in riches or honours; so it is but a more refined idolatry to take up our rest in excellent means of grace. How ill must our dear Lord take it, when we give him cause to complain as he did of our fellow idolaters, My people have been lost sheep, they have forgotten their resting place! Jer. l, 6. "My people can find rest in any thing, rather than in me. They can delight in one another, but not in me. They can rejoice in my creatures and ordinances, but not in me. Yea, in their very labours and duties they seek for rest, but not in me. They had rather be any where, than be with me. Are these their gods? Have these redeemed them? Will these be better to them, than I have been, or than I would be?" If yourselves have a wife, a husband, a son, that had rather be any where than in your company, and be never so merry as when farthest from you, would you not take it ill? So must our God needs do.

12. You contradict the end of God in giving these enjoyments. He gave them to help thee to him, and dost thou take up with them in his stead? He gave them to be refreshments in thy journey, and wouldst thou dwell in thy inn, and go no farther? It may be said of all our comforts and ordinances, as it is said of the Israelites, The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them, to search out a resting place for them, Numb. x, 33. So do all God's mercies here. They are not that rest; as John professed he was not the Christ; but they are voices crying in this wilderness, to bid us prepare, for the kingdom of God, our true rest, is at hand. Therefore, to rest here, were to turn all mercies contrary to their own ends, and to our own advantages, and to destroy ourselves with that which should help us.

13. It is the way to cause God, either to deny th mercies we ask, or take from us those we enjoy, or a least imbitter them to us. God is no where so jealous as here. If you had a servant, whom your wife loved

better than yourself, would you not take it ill of such a wife, and rid your house of such a servant? So, if the Lord see you begin to settle in the world, and say, "Here I will rest," no wonder if he soon in his jealousy unsettle you. If he love you, no wonder if he take that from you with which he sees you are destroying yourselves. It hath been my long observation of many, that when they have attempted great works, and have just finished them;—or have aimed at great things in the world, and have just obtained them;—or have lived in much trouble, and have just overcome it; and begin to look on their condition with content, and rest in it; they are then usually near to death or ruin. When a man is once at this language, Soul take thy ease; the next news usually is, Thou fool, this night, or this month, or this year, thy soul shall be required, and then whose shall these things be? What house is there where this fool dwelleth not? Let you and I consider, whether it be not our own case. Many a servant of God hath been destroyed from the earth, by being over valued, and over loved. I am persuaded, our discontents, and murmurings are not so provoking to God, nor so destructive to the sinner, as our too sweet enjoying, and resting in, a pleasing state. If God hath crossed you in wife, children, goods, friends, either by taking them away, or the comfort of them; try whether this be not the cause: for wheresoever your desires stop, and you say, "Now I am well;" that condition you make your god, and engage the jealousy of God against it. Whether you be friends to God or enemies, you can never expect that God should suffer you quietly to enjoy your idols.

14. Should God suffer you to take up your rest here, it is one of the greatest curses that could befall you. It were better never to have a day of ease in the world; for then weariness might make you seek after the true rest. But if you are suffered to sit down and rest here, a restless wretch you will be through all eternity. To have their portion in this life, is the lot of the most miserable perishing sinners. Doth it become Christians then to expect so much here? Our rest is our heaven; and where we take our rest, there we make our heaven And wouldst thou have but such a heaven as this?

15 It is seeking rest where it is not to be found. Your labour will be lost, and, if you proceed, your soul's eternal rest too. Our rest is only in the full obtaining of our ultimate end. But that is not to be expected in this life; neither is rest therefore to be expected here. Is God to be enjoyed in the best church here, as he is in heaven? How little of God the saints enjoy under the best means, let their own complainings testify. Poor comforters are the best ordinances, without God. Should a traveller take up his rest in the way? No, because his home is his journey's end. When you have all that creatures and means can afford, have you that you believed, prayed, suffered for? I think you dare not say so. We are like little children strayed from home, and God is now fetching us home, and we are ready to turn into any house, stay and play with every thing in our way, and sit down on every green bank, and much ado there is to get us home. We are also in the midst of our labours and dangers; and is there any resting here? What painful work doth lie upon our hands? Look to our brethren, to our souls, and to God; and what a deal of work, in respect of each of these, doth lie before us? And can we rest in the midst of all our labours? Indeed we may rest on earth, as the ark is said to have rested in the midst of Jordan; a short and small rest: or as Abraham desired the angels to turn in, and rest themselves in his tent, where they would have been loath to have taken up their dwelling. Should Israel have fixed their rest in the wilderness, among serpents, and enemies, and weariness, and famine? Should Noah have made the ark his home, and have been loath to come forth when the waters were assuaged? Should the mariner choose his dwelling on the sea, and settle his rest in the midst of rocks, and sands, and raging tempests? Should a soldier rest in the thickest of his enemies? And are not Christians such travellers, such mariners, such soldiers? Have you not fears within, and troubles without? Are we no in continual dangers? We cannot eat, drink, sleep abour, pray, hear, converse, but in the midst of snares and shall we sit down and rest here? O Christian, follow thy work, look to thy dangers, hold on to the end, win the field, and come off the ground, before thou think

of a settled rest. Whenever thou talkest of rest on earth, it is like Peter on the mount, thou knowest not what thou sayest. If, instead of telling the converted thief, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise, Christ had said, he should rest there on the cross; would he not have taken it for a derision? Methinks it should be ill resting in the midst of sickness and pains, persecutions and distresses. But if nothing else will convince us, yet sure the remainders of sin, which do so easily beset us, should quickly satisfy a believer, that here is not his rest. I say therefore to every one that thinkest of rest on earth, Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted, Micah ii, 10. These things cannot in their nature be a true Christian's rest. They are too poor, to make us rich; too low, to raise us to happiness; too empty, to fill our souls; and of too short continuance to be our eternal content. If prosperity, or whatsoever we here desire, be too base to make gods of, they are too base to be our rest. The soul's rest must be sufficient to afford it perpetual satisfaction. But the content which creatures afford, waxes old, and abates after a short enjoyment. If God should rain down angels' food, we should soon loathe the manna. If novelty support not, our delights on earth grow dull. All creatures are to us, as the flowers of the bee; there is but little honey on any one, and therefore there must be superficial taste, and so to the next. The more the creature is known, the less it satisfieth. Those only are taken with it, who see no further than its outward beauty, without discerning its inward vanity. When we thoroughly know the condition of other men, and have discovered the evil as well as the good, and the defects as well as the perfections, we then cease our admiration.

16. To have creatures and means without God is an aggravation of our misery. If God should say, "Take my creatures, my word, my servants, my ordinances, but not myself;" would you take this for happiness? If you had the word of God, and not the Word, which is God; or the bread of the Lord, and not the Lord, which is the true bread; or could cry with the Jews, The temple of the Lord, and had not the Lord of the temple; this were

a poor happiness. Was Capernaum the more happy, or the more miserable, for seeing the mighty works which they had seen, and hearing the words of Christ which they did hear? Surely that, which aggravates our sin and misery, cannot be our rest.

17. To confirm all this, let us consult our own and others' experience. Millions have made trial, but did any ever find a sufficient rest for his soul on earth. Delights I deny not but they have found, but rest and satisfaction they never found. And shall we think to find that which never man could find before us? Ahab's kingdom is nothing to him, without Naboth's vineyard; and did that satisfy him when he obtained it? Were you, like Noah's dove, to look through the earth for a resting place, you would return confessing that you could find none. Go ask honour, is there rest here? You may as well rest on the top of tempestuous mountains, or in Ætna's flames. Ask riches, is there rest in her? Even such as is in a bed of thorns. If you inquire for rest of worldly pleasures; it is such as the fish hath in swallowing the bait; when the pleasure is sweetest, death is nearest. Go to learning, and even to divine ordinances, and inquire whether there your souls may rest? You might indeed receive from these an olive branch of hope, as they are means to your rest, and have relation to eternity; but in regard of any satisfaction in themselves, you would remain as restless as ever. How well might all these answer us, as Jacob did Rachel, Am I in God's stead, that you come to me for soul rest? Not all the states of men in the world; neither court nor country, towns or cities, shops or fields, treasuries, libraries, solitude, society, studies, or pulpits, can afford any such thing as this rest. If you could inquire of the dead of all generations, or of the living through all dominions, they would all tell you, "Here is no rest." Or if other men's experiences move you not, take a view of your own. Can you remember the state that did fully satisfy you, or if you could, will it prove lasting? I believe we may all say of our earthly rest, as Paul of our hope, If it were in this life only, we are of all men most miserable.

18. If then either Scripture, or reason, or the experi-

ence of ourselves, and all the world, will satisfy us, we may see there is no resting here. And yet how guilty are the generality of us of this sin! How many halts and stops do we make before we will make the Lord our rest! How must God even drive us, and fire us out of every condition, lest we should sit down and rest there! If he give us prosperity, riches, or honour, we do in our hearts dance before them, as the Israelites before their calf, and say, These are thy gods, and conclude it is good to be here. If he imbitter all these to us, how restless are we till our condition be sweetened, that we may sit down again, and rest where we were! If he proceed in the cure, and take the creature quite away, then how do we labour, and cry, and pray, that God would restore it, that we may make it our rest again! And while we are deprived of our former idol, yet rather than come to God, we delight ourselves in the hope of recovering it, and make that very hope our rest; or search about from creature to creature, to find out something to supply the room; yea, if we can find no supply, yet we will rather settle in this misery, and make a rest of a wretched being, than leave all and come to God. O the cursed averseness of our souls from God! If any place in hell were tolerable, the soul would rather take up its rest there than come to God. Yea, when he is bringing us over to him, and hath convinced us of the worth of his ways and services, the last deceit of all is here, we will rather settle upon those ways that lead to him, and those ordinances that speak of him, and those gifts which flow from him, than we will come entirely over to himself. Christian, marvel not that I speak so much of resting in these; beware lest it prove thy own case. I suppose thou art so far convinced of the vanity of riches, honour, and pleasure, that thou canst more easily disclaim these, and it is well if it be so; but the means of grace thou lookest on with less suspicion, and thinkest thou canst not delight in them too much, especially seeing most of the world despise them, or delight in them too little. I know they must be loved and valued, and he that delighteth in any worldly thing more than in them, is not a Christian. But when we

are content with ordinances without God, and had rather be at a sermon than in heaven, and a member of the church here, than of the perfect church above, this is a sad mistake. So far let thy soul take comfort in ordinances, as God doth accompany them; remembering this is not heaven, but the first fruits. While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord: and while we are absent from him we are absent from our rest. If God were as willing to be absent from us, as we from him, and as loath to be our rest, as we to rest in him, we should be left to an eternal restless separation. In a word, as you are sensible of the sinfulness of your earthly discontents, so be you also of your irregular satisfaction, and pray God to pardon them much more. And above all the plagues on this side hell, see that you watch and pray against settling any where short of heaven, or reposing your souls on any thing below God.

19. The next thing to be considered is, our unreasonable unwillingness to die that we may possess the saint's rest. We linger, like Lot in Sodom, till the Lord, being merciful unto us, doth pluck us away against our wills. I confess that death of itself is not desirable; but the soul's rest with God is, to which death is the common passage. Because we are apt to make light of this, let me set before you its nature and remedy in a variety of considerations. As for instance: it has in it much infidelity. If we did but verily believe, that the promise of this glory is the word of God, and that God doth truly mean as he speaks, and is fully resolved to make it good; if we did verily believe, that there is indeed such blessedness prepared for believers; surely we should be as impatient of living, as we are now fearful of dying, and should think every day a year till our last day should come. Is it possible that we can truly believe, that death will remove us from misery to such glory, and yet be loath to die? If the doubts of our own interest in that glory make us fear, yet a true belief of the certainty and excellency of this rest would make us restless till our title to it be cleared. Though there is much faith and Christianity in our mouths, yet there is much infidelity and paganism in our hearts, which is the chief cause tha

we are so loathe to die. It is also much owing to the coldness of our love. If we love our friend, we love his company; his presence is comfortable, his absence is painful, when he comes to us we entertain him with gladness; when he dies, we mourn, and usually overmourn. To be separated from a faithful friend, is like the rending a member from our body. And would not our desires after God be such, if we really loved him? Nay, should it not be much more than such, as he is above all friends most lovely? May the Lord teach us to look closely to our hearts, and take heed of self deceit in this point! Whatever we pretend, if we love either father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend, wealth, or life itself, more than Christ, we are yet none of his sincere disciples. When it come to the trial, the question will not be, who hath preached most, or heard most, or talked most; but, who hath loved most? Christ will not take sermons, prayers, fastings, no, nor the giving our goods, nor the burning our bodies, instead of love. And do we love him, and yet care not how long we are from him? Was it such a joy to Jacob to see the face of Joseph in Egypt; and shall we be contented without the sight of Christ in glory, and yet say we love him? I dare not conclude, that we have no love at all, when we are so loath to die; but I dare say, were our love more, we should die more willingly. If this holy flame were thoroughly kindled in our breasts, we should cry out with David, As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? By our unwillingness to die, it appears we are little weary of sin. Did we take sin for the greatest evil, we should not be willing to have its company so long. "O foolish, sinful heart! Hast thou been so long a cage of all unclean lusts, a fountain incessantly streaming forth the bitter waters of transgression, and art thou not yet weary? Wretched soul! Hast thou been so long wounded in all thy faculties, so grievously languishing in all thy performances, so fruitful a soil of all iniquities, and art thou not yet more weary? Wouldst thou still lie under thy imperfections? Hath

thy sin proved so profitable a commodity, so necessary a companion, such a delightful employment, that thou dost so much dread the parting day? May not God justly grant thee thy wishes and seal thee a lease of the desired distance from him, and nail thy ears to these doors of misery, and exclude thee eternally from his glory?" It shows that we are insensible of the vanity of the creature, when we are so loath to hear or think of a removal. "Ah foolish, wretched soul, doth every prisoner groan for freedom; and every slave desire his jubilee; and every sick man long for health; and every hungry man for food; and dost thou alone abhor deliverance? Doth the sailor wish to see land? Doth the husbandman desire the harvest, and the labourer to receive his pay? Doth the traveller long to be at home, and the racer to win the prize, and the soldier to win the field? and art thou loath to see thy labours finished, and to receive the end of thy faith and sufferings? Have thy griefs been only dreams? If they were, yet methinks thou shouldst not be afraid of waking. Or is it not rather the world's delights that are all mere dreams and shadows? Or is the world become of late more kind? We may at our peril, reconcile ourselves to the world, but it will never reconcile itself to us. O unworthy soul! who hadst rather dwell in this land of darkness, and wander in this barren wilderness, than be at rest with Jesus Christ! who hadst rather stay among the wolves, and daily suffer the scorpions' stings, than praise the Lord with the host of heaven!"

20. This unwillingness to die, doth actually impeach us of high treason against the Lord. Is it not a choosing of earth before him, and taking present things for our happiness, and consequently making them our very God? If we did indeed make God our end, our rest, our portion, our treasure, how is it possible but we should desire to enjoy him? It moreover discovers some dissimulation. Would you have any man believe you, when you call the Lord your only hope, and speak of Christ as all in all, and of the joy that is in his presence, and yet would endure the hardest life, rather than die, and enter into his presence? What self contradiction is this,

to talk so hardly of the world, and the flesh, to groan and complain of sin and suffering; and yet fear no day more than that, which we expect should bring our final freedom! What hypocrisy is this, to profess to strive and fight for heaven, which we are loath to come to; and spend one hour after another in prayer, for that which we would not have! Hereby we wrong the Lord and his remises, and disgrace his ways in the eyes of the world. As if we would persuade them to question, whether God e true to his word or not? Whether there be any such glory as the Scripture mentions? When they see those so loath to leave their hold of present things, who have professed to live by faith, and have boasted of their hopes in another world, and spoken disgracefully of all things below in comparison of things above; how doth this confirm the world in their unbelief and sensuality? "Sure," say they, "if these professors did expect so much glory, and make so light of the world as they seem, they would not themselves be so loath to change." O how are we ever able to repair the wrong which we do to God and souls by this scandal? And what an honour to God what a strengthening to believers, what a conviction to unbelievers, would it be, if Christians in this did answer their professions, and cheerfully welcome the news of rest! It also evidently shows, that we have spent much time to little purpose. Have we not had all our lifetime to prepare to die? So many years to make ready for one hour, and are we so unready and unwilling yet! What have we done? Why have we lived? Had we any great matters to mind? Would we have wished for more frequent warnings? How oft hath death entered the habitations of our neighbours? How oft hath it knocked at our own doors? How many distempers have vexed our bodies, that we have been forced to receive the sentence of death? And are we unready and unwilling after all this? O careless, dead hearted sinners! unwor hy neglecters of God's warnings! faithless betrayers o our own souls!

21. Consider, not to die, is never to be happy. To escape death, is to miss of blessedness; except God should translate us, as Enoch and Elijah; which he never did

before or since. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. If you would not die, and go to heaven, what would you have more than an epicure, or a beast? Why do we pray, and fast, and mourn? Why do we suffer the contempt of the world? Why are we Christians, and not pagans and infidels; if we do not desire a life to come? Wouldst thou lose thy faith and labour, Christian, all thy duties and sufferings, all the end of thy life, and all the blood of Christ, and be contented with the portion of a worldling or a brute? Rather say, as one did on his death bed, when he was asked whether he was willing to die or not. "Let him be loath to die, who is loath to be with Christ." Is God willing by death to glorify us, and are we unwilling to die, that we may be glorified? Methinks, if a prince were willing to make you his heir, you would scarce be unwilling to accept it; the refusing such a kindness would discover ingratitude and unworthiness. As God hath resolved against them who make excuses when they should come to Christ, none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper; so is it just with him to resolve against us, who frame excuses when we should come to glory. The Lord Jesus Christ was willing to come from heaven to earth for us, and shall we be unwilling to remove from earth to heaven, for ourselves and him? He might have said, "What is it to me if these sinners suffer? If they value their flesh above their spirits, and their lusts above my Father's love, if they will sell their soul for nought, who is it fit should be the loser? Should I, whom they have wronged? Must they wilfully transgress my law, and I undergo their deserved pain? Must I come down from heaven to earth, and clothe myself with human flesh, be spit upon and scorned by man, and fast, and weep, and sweat, and suffer, and bleed, and die a cursed death; and all this for wretched worms, who would rather hazard their souls, than forbear one forbidden morsel? Do they cast away themselves so slightly, and must I redeem them so dearly?" Thus we see Christ had reason enough to have made him unwilling; and yet did he voluntarily condescend. But we have no reason against our coming to him; except we

will reason against our hopes, and plead for a perpetuity of our own calamities. Christ came down to fetch us up; and would we have him lose his blood and labour, and go again without us? Hath he bought our rest at so dear a rate? Is our inheritance purchased with his blood? And are we, after all this, loath to enter? Ah, sirs, it was Christ, and not we, that had cause to be loath. May the Lord forgive, and heal this foolish ingratitude!

22. Do we not combine with our most cruel foes in their most malicious designs, while we are loath to die, and go to heaven? What is the devil's daily business? Is it not to keep our souls from God? And shall we be content with this? Is it not the one half of hell, which we wish to ourselves, while we desire to be absent from heaven? What sport is this to Satan, that his desires and thine, Christian, should so concur! that when he sees he cannot get thee to hell, he can so long keep thee out of heaven, and make thee the earnest petitioner for it thyself! O gratify not the devil so much to thy own injury! Do not our daily fears of death make our lives a continual torment? Those lives which might be full of joy, in the daily contemplation of the life to come, and the sweet delightful thoughts of bliss; how do we fill them up with causeless terrors! Thus we consume our own comforts, and prey upon our truest pleasures. When we might lie down, and rise up, and walk abroad, with our hearts full of the joys of God, we continually fill them with perplexing fears. For he that fears dying, must be always fearing; because he hath always reason to expect it. And how can that man's life be comfortable, who lives in continual fear of losing his comforts? Are not these fears of death self created sufferings? As if God had not inflicted enough upon us, but we must inflict more upon ourselves. Is not death bitter enough to the flesh of itself, but we must double and treble its bitterness? The sufferings laid upon us by God, do all lead to happy issues; the progress is from tribulation t patience, from thence to experience, and so to hope, and at last to glory. But the sufferings we make for ourselves are circular and endless, from sin to suffering, from suffering to sin, and so to suffering again; and not

only so, but they multiply in their course; every sin is greater than the former, and so every suffering also: so that, except we think God hath made us to be our own tormentors, we have small reason to nourish our fears of death. And are they not useless, unprofitable fears? As all our care cannot make one hair white or black, nor add one cubit to our stature; so neither can our fear prevent our sufferings, nor delay our death one hour; willing, or unwilling, we must away. Many a man's fears have hastened his end, but no man's ever did avert it. 'Tis true, a cautious fear, concerning the danger after death, hath profited many, and is very useful to the preventing of that danger; but for a member of Christ, and an heir of heaven, to be afraid of entering his own inheritance, is a sinful useless fear. And do not our fears of dying ensnare our souls, and add strength to many temptations? What made Peter deny his Lord? What makes apostates in suffering times forsake the truth? Why doth the green blade of unrooted faith wither before the heat of persecution? Fear of imprisonment and poverty may do much, but fear of death will do much more. So much fear as we have of death, so much cowardice we usually have in the cause of God: beside the multitude of unbelieving contrivances, and discontents, at the wise disposals of God, and hard thoughts of most of his providences, which this sin doth make us guilty of.

23. Let us farther consider, what a competent time most of us have had. Why should not a man, that would die at all, be as willing at thirty or forty, if God see fit, as at seventy or eighty? Length of time doth not conquer corruption; it never withers nor decays through age. Except we receive an addition of grace, as well as time, we naturally grow worse. "O my soul depart in peace! As thou wouldst not desire an unlimited state in wealth and honour, so desire it not in point of time. If thou wast sensible, how little thou deservest an hour of that patience which thou hast enjoyed, thou wouldst think thou hast had a large part. Is it not divine wisdom that sets the bounds? God will honour himself by various persons, and several ages, and not by one person, or age. Seeing thou hast acted thine own part, and

finished thine appointed course, come down contentedly, that others may succeed, who must have their turns as well as thyself. Much time hath much duty. Beg therefore for grace to improve it better; but be content with thy share of time. Thou hast also had a competency of the comforts of life. God might have made thy life a burden, till thou hadst been as weary of possessing it, as thou art now afraid of losing it. He might have suffered thee to have consumed thy days in ignorance, without the saving knowledge of Christ: but he hath opened thine eyes in the morning of thy days, and acquainted thee betimes with the business of thy life. Hath thy heavenly Father caused thy lot to fall in Europe, not in Asia, Africa, or America; in England, not in Spain or Italy? Hath he filled up all thy life with mercies, and dost thou now think thy share too small? What a multitude of hours of consolation, of delightful sabbaths, of pleasant studies, of precious companions, of wonderful deliverances, of excellent opportunities, of fruitful labours, of joyful tidings, of sweet experiences, of astonishing providences, hath thy life partaken of? Hath thy life been so sweet, that thou art loath to leave it? Are thy thanks so him, who is thus drawing thee to his own sweetness? O foolish soul! would thou wast as covetous after eternity, as thou art for a fading, perishing life! and after the presence of God in glory, as thou art for continuance on earth! Then thou wouldst cry, why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? How long, Lord! how long! What if God should let thee live many years, but deny thee the mercies which thou hast hitherto enjoyed? Might he not give thee life, as he gave the murmuring Israelites quails? He might give thee life, till thou art weary of living, and as glad to be rid of it as Judas or Ahitophel; and make thee like many miserable creatures in the world, who can hardly forbear lying violent hands on themselves. Be not therefore so importunate for life, which may prove a judgment instead of a blessing. How many of the precious servants of God, of all ages and places, have gone before thee! Thou art not to enter an untrodden path, nor appointed first to break the ice. Except Enoch and Elijah,

which of the saints have escaped death? And art thou better than they? There are many millions of saints dead, more than now remain on earth. What a number of thine own bosom friends, and companions in duty, are now gone, and why shouldst thou be so loath to follow? Nay, hath not Jesus Christ himself gone this way? Hath he not sanctified the grave to us, and perfumed the dust with his own body, and art thou loath to follow him too? Rather say, as Thomas, let us also go, that we may die with him."

24. If what hath been said, will not persuade, Scripture and reason have little force. And I have said the more on this subject, finding it so needful to myself and others; finding among so many Christians, who could do and suffer much for Christ, so few that can willingly die; and of many, who have somewhat subdued other corruptions, so few have got the conquest of this, I persuade not the ungodly from fearing death: 'tis a wonder rather, that they fear it no more, and spend not their days in continual horror.

CHAPTER XI.

The importance of leading a heavenly life on earth.

1. The reasonableness of delighting in the thoughts of the saint's rest. 2. Christians exhorted to it, by considering, 3. It will evidence their sincere piety; 4. It is the highest excellence of the Christian temper; 5. It leads to the most comfortable life; 6–9. It will be the best preservative from temptations to sin; 10. It will invigorate their graces and duties; 11. It will be their best cordial in all afflictions; 12. It will render them most profitable to others; 13. It will honour God; 14. Without it we disobey the commands, and lose the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God; 15. It is the more reasonable to have our hearts with God, as his is so much on us; 15, 17. and in heaven, where we have so much interest and relation; 18. Besides, there is nothing but heaven, worth setting our hearts upon. 19. Transition to the subject of the next chapter.

1. Is there such a rest remaining for us? Why then are our thoughts no more upon it? Why are not our hearts continually there? Why dwell we not there in constant contemplation? What is the cause of this neglect? Are we reasonable in this, or are we not? Hath the eternal God provided us such a glory, and promised to take us

up to dwell with himself, and is not this worth thinking on? Should not the strongest desires of our hearts be after it? Do we believe this, and yet forget and neglect it? If God will not give us leave to approach this light, what means all his earnest invitations? Why doth he so condemn our earthly mindedness, and command us to set our affections on things above? Ah, vile hearts! If God were against it, we were likelier to be for it? when he commands our hearts to heaven, then they will not stir one inch: like our predecessors, the sinful Israelites; when God would have them march for Canaan, then they mutiny, and will not stir; but when God bids them not go, then they will be presently marching. If God say, love not the world, nor the things of the world; we dote upon it. How freely, how frequently can we think of our pleasures, our friends, our labours, our flesh and its lusts, yea, our wrongs and miseries, our fears and sufferings? But where is the Christian whose heart is on his rest? What is the matter? Are we so full of joy that we need no more? Or is there nothing in heaven for our joyous thoughts? Or rather are not our hearts carnal and stupid? Let us humble these sensual hearts that have in them no more of Christ and glory. If this world was the only subject of our discourse, all would count us ungodly; why then may we not call our hearts ungodly, that we have so little delight in Christ and heaven?

2. But I am speaking only to those, whose portion is in heaven, whose hopes are there, and who have forsaken all to enjoy this glory; and shall I be discouraged from persuading such to be heavenly minded? Fellow Christians, if you will not hear and obey, who will? Well may we be discouraged to exhort the blind, ungodly world, and may say, as Moses did, behold the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me, how then shall Pharaoh hear me? I require thee, reader, as ever thou hopest for a part in this glory, that thou presently take thy heart to task, chide it for its wilful strangeness to God, turn thy thoughts from the pursuit of vanity, bend thy soul to study eternity, busy it about the life to come, habituate thyself to such contemplations, and let not those thoughts be seldom and cursory, but bathe thy

soul in heaven's delights; and if thy backward soul begin to flag, and thy thoughts to scatter, call them back, hold them to their work, bear not with their laziness, nor connive at one neglect. And when thou hast in obedience to God, tried this work, got acquainted with it, and kept a guard on thy thoughts till they are accustomed to obey, thou wilt then find thyself in the suburbs of heaven, and that there is, indeed, a sweetness in the work and way of God, and that the life of Christianity is a life of joy. Thou wilt meet with those abundant consolations which thou hast prayed, panted, and groaned after, and which so few Christians do ever here obtain, because they know not this way to them, or else make not conscience of walking in it. Say not, "We are unable to set our hearts on heaven; this must be the work of God only." Though God be the chief disposer of your hearts, yet next under him you have the greatest command of them yourselves. Though without Christ you can do nothing, yet under him you may do much, and must, or else it will be undone, and yourselves undone, through your neglect. Christians, if your souls were healthful and vigorous, they would perceive incomparably more delight and sweetness in the believing joyful thoughts of your future blessedness, than the soundest stomach finds in its food, or the strongest senses in the enjoyment of their objects; so little painful would this work be to you. But because, I know, while we have flesh about us, and any remains of that carnal mind, which is enmity to God, and to this noble work, that all motives are little enough, I will here lay down some considerations; which, if you will deliberately weigh with an impartial judgment, I doubt not but they will prove effectual with your hearts, and make you resolve on this excellent duty. More particularly consider; it will evidence your sincere piety; it is the highest excellence of the Christian temper; it is the way to live most comfortably; it will be the best preservative from temptations to sin; it will enliven your graces and duties; it will be your best cordial in all afflictions; it will render you most profitable to others; it will honour God; without it you will disobey the commands and lose the most

gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God; it is also the more reasonable to have your hearts with God, as his is so much on you; and in heaven, where you have so much interest and relation; besides there is nothing, but heaven, worth setting your hearts upon.

3. Consider, a heart set upon heaven will be one of the most unquestionable evidences of your sincerity, and a clear discovery of a true work of saving grace upon your souls. You are often asking, "How shall we know that we are truly sanctified?" Here you have a sign, infallible, from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself; where your treasure is there will your heart be also, Matt. vi, 21. God is the saint's treasure and happiness; heaven is the place where they must fully enjoy him. A heart therefore set upon heaven is no more but a heart set upon God; and, surely a heart set upon God through Christ, is the truest evidence of saving grace. When learning will be no proof of grace; when knowledge, duties, gifts will fail; when arguments from thy tongue or hand may be confuted; yet then will this from the bent of thy heart prove thee sincere. Take a poor Christian, of a weak understanding, a feeble memory, a stammering tongue; yet his heart is set on God, he hath chosen him for his portion, his thoughts are on eternity, his desires there, he cries out, "O that I were there!" he takes that day for a time of imprisonment, in which he hath not had one refreshing view of eternity; I had rather die in this man's condition, than in the case of him who hath the most eminent gifts, and is most admired for his performances, while his heart is not thus taken up with God. The man that Christ will find out at the last day, and condemn for want of a wedding garment, will be one that wants this frame of heart. The question will not then be, how much have you known, or professed, or talked? but, how much have you loved, and where was your heart? Christians, as you would have a proof of your title to glory, labour to get your hearts above. If sin and Satan keep not your affections from thence, they will never be able to keep away your persons.

4. A heart in heaven is the highest excellence of your Christian temper. As there is a common excellence, by

which Christians differ from the world; so there is this peculiar dignity of spirit, by which the more excellent differ from the rest. As the noblest of creatures, so the noblest of Christians are they, whose faces are set most direct for heaven. Such a heavenly saint, who hath been wrapt up to God in his contemplations, and is newly come down from the views of Christ, what discoveries will he make of those superior regions! how high and sacred is his discourse! Enough to convince an understanding hearer that he had seen the Lord, and that no man could speak such words, except he had been with God. This, this is the noble Christian. The most famous mountains and trees are those that reach nearest to heaven; and he is the choicest Christian, whose heart is most frequently and most delightfully there. If a man have lived near the king, or hath seen the sultan of Persia, or the great Turk, he will be thought a step higher than his neighbours. What then shall we judge of him that daily travels as far as heaven, and there hath seen the King of kings, hath frequent admittance into the divine presence, and feasteth his soul upon the tree of life? For my part, I value this man before the noblest, the richest, the most learned in the world.

5. A heavenly mind is the nearest and truest way to a life of comfort. The countries far north are cold and frozen because they are distant from the sun. What makes such frozen, uncomfortable Christians, but they living so far from heaven? And what makes others so warm in comforts, but their living higher, and having nearer access to God? When the sun in the spring draws near our part of the earth, how do all things congratulate its approach! The earth looks green, the trees shoot forth, the plants revive, the birds sing, and all things smile upon us. If we would but try this life with God, and keep these hearts above, what a spring of joy would be within us! How should we forget our winter sorrows! How early should we rise to sing the praise of our grea Creator! O Christian, get above. Those that have been there, have found it warmer; and I doubt not but thou hast sometimes tried it thyself. When have you largest comforts? Is it not when thou hast conversed with God,

and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world, and viewed their mansions, and filled thy soul with the forethoughts of glory? If thou knowest by experience what this practice is, I dare say thou knowest what spiritual joy is. If, as David professes, the light of God's countenance more gladdens the heart than corn and wine; then surely they that draw nearest, and most behold it, must be fullest of these joys. Whom should we blame then, that we are so void of consolation, but our own negligent hearts? God hath provided us a crown of glory, and promised to set it shortly on our heads, and we will not so much as think of it: He bids us behold and rejoice, and we will not so much as look at it; and yet we complain for want of comfort. It is by believing that we are filled with joy and peace, and no longer than we continue our believing. It is in hope the saint's rejoice, and no longer than they continue hoping. God's Spirit worketh our comforts, by setting our own spirits on work upon the promises, and raising our thoughts to the place of our comforts. As you would delight a covetous man by showing him gold; so God delights his people by leading them as it were into heaven, and showing them himself, and their rest with him. He does not cast in our joys while we are idle, or taken up with other things. He gives the fruits of the earth while we plough, and sow, and weed, and water, and dung, and dress, and with patience expect his blessing; so doth he give the joys of the soul. I entreat thee, reader, in the name of the Lord, and as thou valuest the life of constant joy, and that good conscience, which is a continual feast, to set upon this work seriously, and learn the art of heavenly mindedness, and thou shalt find the increase a hundred fold, and the benefit abundantly exceed thy labour. But this is the misery of man's nature; though every man naturally hates sorrow, and loves the most merry and joyful life, yet few love the way to joy, or will endure the pains by which it is obtained; they will take the next that comes to hand, and content themselves with earthly pleasures, rather than they will ascend to heaven to seek it; and yet when all is done, they must have it there, or be without it.

6. A heart in heaven will be a most excellent preservative against temptation to sin. It will keep the heart well employed. When we are idle, we tempt the devil to tempt us; as careless persons make thieves. A heart in heaven can reply to the tempter, as Nehemiah did, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come. It hath no leisure to be lustful or wanton, ambitious or worldly. If you were but busy in your lawful callings, you would not be so ready to hearken to temptations; much less if you were also busy above with God. Would a judge be persuaded to rise from the bench, when he is sitting upon life and death, to go and play with children in the streets? No more will a Christian, when he is taking a survey of his eternal rest, give ear to the alluring charms of Satan. The children of that kingdom should never have time for trifles, especially when they are employed in the affairs of the kingdom; and this employment is one of the saint's chief preservatives from temptations.

7. A heavenly mind is freest from sin, because it hath truer and livelier apprehensions of spiritual things. He hath so deep an insight into the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the brutishness of fleshly, sensual delights, that temptations have little power over him. In vain the net is spread, says Solomon, in the sight of any bird. And usually in vain doth Satan lay his snares to entrap the soul that plainly sees them. Earth is the place for his temptations, and earth the ordinary bait; and how shall these ensnare the Christian, who hath left the earth, and walks with God? Is converse with wise and learned men the way to make one wise? Much more is converse with God. If travellers return home with wisdom and experience, how much more he that travels to heaven? If our bodies are suited to the air and climate we must live in; his understanding must be fuller of light, who lives with the Father of lights. The men of the world, that dwell below, and know no other conversation but earthly, no wonder if their understanding be darkened, and Satan takes them captive at his will. How can worms and moles see, whose dwelling is always in the earth? While this dust is in their eyes, no wonder they mistake gain for godliness, sin for grace, the world for

God, their own wills for the law of Christ, and in the issue, hell for heaven. But when a Christian withdraws himself from his worldly thoughts, and begins to converse with God in heaven, methinks he is, as Nebuchadnezzar, taken from the beast of the field to the throne, and his reason returneth unto him. When he hath had a glimpse of eternity, and looks down on the world again, how doth he charge with folly his neglects of Christ, his fleshly pleasures, his earthly cares! How doth he say to his laughter, It is mad; and to his vain mirth, What doth it? how doth he verily think there is no man in bedlam so truly mad, as wilful sinners, and unworthy slighters of Christ and glory! This makes a dying man usually wiser than others, because he looks on eternity as near, and hath more heart piercing thoughts of it, than he ever had in health and prosperity. Then many of the most bitter enemies of the saints have their eyes opened, and, like Balaam cry out, O that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my last end might be like his! Yet let the same men recover, and lose their apprehensions of the life to come, and how quickly do they lose their understandings with it! Tell a dying sinner of the riches, honours, or pleasures of the world, and would he not answer, "What is all this to me, who must presently appear before God, and give account of all my life?" Christian, if the apprehended nearness of eternity will work such strange effects upon the ungodly, and make them so much wiser than before; O what rare effects would it produce in thee, if thou couldst always dwell in the views of God, and in lively thoughts of thy everlasting state! Surely a believer, if he improve his faith, may ordinarily have more quickening apprehensions of the life to come, in the time of his health, than an unbeliever hath at the hour of his death.

8. A heavenly mind is also fortified against temptations, because the affections are thoroughly prepossessed with the high delights of another world. He that loves most, and not he that only knows most, will most easily resist the motions of sin. The will doth as sweetly relish goodness, as the understanding doth truth; and here lies much of a Christian's strength. When thou hast had a

fresh delightful taste of heaven, thou wilt not be so easily persuaded from it. You cannot persuade a child to part with his sweetmeats, while he hath the taste in his mouth. O that you would be much in feeding on the hidden manna, and be frequently tasting the delights of heaven! How would this confirm thy resolutions, and make thee despise the fooleries of the world, and scorn to be cheated with such childish toys! If the devil had set upon Peter in the mount of transfiguration, when he saw Moses and Elias talking with Christ, would he so easily have been drawn to deny his Lord? What, with all that glory in his eye? No. So if he should set upon a believing soul, when he is taken up in the mount with Christ, what would such a soul say? "Get thee behind me, Satan; wouldst thou persuade me hence with trifling pleasures, and steal my heart from this my rest? Wouldst thou have me sell these joys for nothing? Is there any honour or delight like this? or can that be profit, for which I must lose this?" But Satan stays till we are come down, and the taste of heaven is out of our mouths, and the glory we saw is even forgotten, and then he easily deceives our hearts. Though the Israelites below, eat, and drink, and rise up to play before their idols, Moses in the mount will not do so. O if we could keep the taste of our souls continually delighted with the sweetness above, with what disdain should we spit out the baits of sin?

9. Besides, while the heart is set on heaven, a man is under God's protection. If Satan then assault us, God is more engaged for our defence, and will doubtless stand by us, and say, My grace is sufficient for thee. When a man is in the way of God's blessing, he is in the less danger of sin's enticing. Amid thy temptations, Christian reader, use much this powerful remedy; keep close with God by a heavenly mind; follow your business above with Christ, and you will find this a surer help than any other. The way of life is above to the wise that he may depart from hell beneath, Prov. xv, 24 Remember that Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; for he walked with God: and that God said to Abraham, Walk before me, and be thou perfect.

10. The diligent keeping your hearts in heaven will maintain the vigour of all your graces, and put life into all your duties. The heavenly Christian is the lively Christian. 'Tis our strangeness to heaven that makes us so dull. How will the soldier hazard his life, and the mariner pass through storms and waves, and no difficulty keep them back, when they think of an uncertain perishing treasure? What life then would it put into a Christian's endeavours, if he would frequently think of his everlasting treasure? We run so slowly, and strive so lazily, because we so little mind the prize. Observe but the man who is much in heaven, and you shall see he is not like other Christians; there is something of what he hath seen above, appeareth in all his duty and conversation. If a preacher, how heavenly are his sermons! If a private Christian, what heavenly converse, prayers, and deportment! Set upon this employment, and others will see the face of your conversation shine, and say, surely he hath been with God in the mount. But if you lie complaining of deadness and dulness, that you can not love Christ, nor rejoice in his love, that you have no life in prayer, nor any other duty; and yet neglect this quickening employment; you are the cause of your own complaints. Is not thy life hid with Christ in God? Where must thou go but to Christ for it? And where is that but to heaven, where Christ is? Thou wilt not come to Christ, that thou mayst have life. If thou wouldst have light and heat, why art thou no more in the sunshine? For want of this recourse to heaven, thy soul is a lamp that is not lighted, and thy duties as a sacrifice which hath no fire. Fetch one coal daily from this altar, and see if thy offering will not burn. Light thy lamp at the flame, and feed it daily with oil from hence, and see if it will not gloriously shine. Keep close to this reviving fire, and see if thy affections will not be warm. In thy want of love to God, lift up thy eye of faith to heaven, behold his beauty, contemplate his excellencies, and see whether his amiableness and perfect goodness will not ravish thy heart. As exercise maintaineth appetite, strength, and vigour to the body; so these heavenly exercises will quickly cause the increase of grace and spi

ritual life. Besides it is not false or strange fire, which you fetch from heaven for your sacrifices. The zeal which is kindled by your meditations on heaven is most likely to be a heavenly zeal. Some men's fervency is only drawn from their books, and some from the sharpness of affliction, and some from the mouth of a moving minister, and some from the attention of an auditory: but he that knows his way to heaven, and derives it daily from the true fountain, shall have his soul revived with the water of life, and enjoy that quickening which is peculiar to the saints. By this faith thou mayst offer Abel's sacrifice, more excellent than that of common men, and by it obtain witness, that thou art righteous, God testifying of thy gifts, that they are sincere. When others are ready, like Baal's priests, to cut themselves, because their sacrifice will not burn; thou mayst breathe the spirit of Elijah, and in the chariot of contemplation soar aloft, till thy soul and sacrifice gloriously flame, though the flesh and the world should cast upon them all the water of their opposing enmity. Say not, how can mortals ascend to heaven? Faith hath wings, and meditation is its chariot. Faith is as a burning glass to thy sacrifice, and meditation sets it to the face of the sun; only take it not away too soon, but hold it there a while, and thy soul will feel the happy effect. Reader, art thou not thinking when thou seest a lively Christian, and hearest his lively, fervent prayers, and edifying discourse, "O how happy a man is this! O that my soul were in this blessed condition!" Why, I here advise thee from God, set thy soul conscientiously to this work. wash thee frequently in this Jordan, and thy leprous dead soul will revive, and thou shalt know that there is a God in Israel, and that thou mayst live a vigorous and joyful life, if thou dost not wilfully neglect thy own mercies.

11. The frequent believing views of glory are the most precious cordials in all afflictions. These cordials, by cheering our spirits, render our sufferings far more easy; enable us to bear them with patience and joy; and so strengthen our resolutions, that we forsake not Christ for fear of trouble. If the way be ever so rough, can it be

tedious if it lead to heaven? O sweet sickness, reproaches, imprisonments, or death, accompanied with these tastes of our future rest! This keeps the suffering from the soul, so that it can only touch the flesh. Had it not been for that little (alas, too little) taste which I had of rest, my sufferings would have been grievous, and death more terrible. I may say, I had fainted, unless I had believed, to see the goodness of the Lord, in the land of the living. Unless this promised rest had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me: he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me. Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifice of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord, Psalm xxvii, 4–6. All sufferings are nothing to us, so far as we have these supporting joys. When persecutions and fear hath shut the doors, Christ can come in, and stand in the midst, and say to his disciples, Peace be unto you. Paul and Silas can be in heaven even when they are thrust into the inner prison, their bodies scourged with many stripes, and their feet fast in the stocks. The martyrs find more rest in their flames, than their persecutors in their pomp and tyranny; because they foresee the flames they escape, and the rest which their fiery chariot is conveying them to. If the Son of God will walk with us, we are safe in the midst of those flames, which shall devour them that cast us in. Abraham went out of his country, not knowing whither he went; because he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, because he had respect unto the recompense of reward. He forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; because he endured as seeing him who is invisible. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Even Jesus, the author and

finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. This is the noble advantage of faith, it can look on the means and end together. This is the great reason of our impatience, and censuring God, because we gaze on the evil itself, but fix not our thoughts on what is beyond it. They that saw Christ only on the cross, or in the grave, do shake their heads, and think him lost; but God saw him dying, buried, rising, glorified, and all this at one view. Faith will in this imitate God, so far as it hath the glass of a promise to help it. We see God burying us under ground, but we foresee not the spring, when we shall revive. Could we but clearly see heaven, as the end of all God's dealings with us, surely none of his dealings could be so grievous. If God would once raise us to this life, we should find, that though heaven and sin are at a great distance; yet heaven and a prison or banishment, heaven and the belly of a whale, or a den of lions, heaven and consuming sickness, or invading death, are at no such distance. But as Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced; so we in our most forlorn state, might see that day when Christ shall give us rest, and therein rejoice. I beseech thee, Christian, for the honour of the gospel, and for thy soul's comfort, be not to learn this heavenly art, when in thy greatest extremity thou hast most need to use it. He that, with Stephen, sees the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, will comfortably bear the shower of stones. The joy of the Lord is our strength, and that joy must be fetched from the place of our joy! and if we walk without our strength, how long are we like to endure?

12. He that hath his conversation in heaven is the profitable Christian to all about him. When a man is in a strange country, how glad is he of the company of one of his own nation? How delightful is it to talk of their own country, their acquaintance and affairs at home? With what pleasure did Joseph talk with his brethren, and inquire after his father, and his brother Benjamin? Is it not so to a Christian, to talk with his brethren that have been above, and inquire after his

Father, and Christ his Lord? When a worldly man will talk of nothing but the world, and a politician of state affairs, and a mere scholar of human learning, and a common professor of his duties; the heavenly man will be speaking of heaven, and the strange glory his faith hath seen, and our speedy and blessed meeting there. O how refreshing and useful are his expressions! How his words pierce and melt the heart, and transform the hearers into other men! How doth his doctrine drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass, while his lips publish the name of the Lord, and ascribe greatness unto his God! Is not his sweet discourse of heaven, like the box of precious ointment, which being poured out on the head of Christ, filled the house with the odour? All that are near may be refreshed by it. Happy the people that have a heavenly minister! Happy the children and servants that have a heavenly father or master! Happy the man that hath a heavenly companion, who will watch over thy ways, strengthen thee when thou art drooping, and comfort thee with the comfort wherewith he himself hath been so often comforted of God! This is he that will be always blowing at the spark of thy spiritual life, and drawing thy soul to God, and will say to thee as the Samaritan woman, Come and see one that hath told me all that ever I did; one that hath loved our souls to the death. Is not this the Christ? Is not the knowledge of God and him eternal life! Is not the glory of the saints, to see his glory? Come to this man's house and sit at his table, and he will feast thy soul with the dainties of heaven. Travel with him by the way, and he will direct and quicken thee in thy journey to heaven: trade with him in the world, and he will counsel thee to buy the pearl of great price. If thou wrong him, he can pardon thee, remembering that Christ hath pardoned his greater offences: if thou be angry, he is meek, considering the meekness of his heavenly pattern: or if he fall out with you, he is soon reconciled, when he recollects that in heaven you must be everlasting friends. This is the Christian of the right stamp, and all about him are the better for him

How unprofitable is the society of all other sorts of Christians in comparison with this! If a man should come from heaven, how would men long to hear what reports he would make of the other world, and what he had seen, and what the blessed there enjoy! Would they not think this man the best companion, and his discourse the most profitable? Why then do you value the company of saints no more, and inquire no more of them and relish their discourse no better? For every sain shall go to heaven in person, and is frequently there in spirit, and hath often viewed it in the glass of the gospel. For my part, I had rather have the company of a heavenly minded Christian, than of the most learned disputants, or princely commanders.

13. No man so highly honoureth God, as he whose conversation is in heaven. Is not a parent disgraced, when children feed on husks, are clothed in rags, and keep company with none but rogues and beggars? Is it not so to our heavenly Father, when we, who call ourselves his children, feed on earth, and the garb of our souls is like that of the naked world; and our hearts familiarly converse with, and cleave to the dust, rather than stand continually in our Father's presence? Surely we live below the children of a king, not according to the height of our hopes, nor the provision of our Father's house, and the great preparations made for his saints. It is well we have a Father of tender bowels, who will own his children in rags. If he did not first challenge his interest in us, neither ourselves, nor others, could know us to be his people. But when a Christian can live above, and rejoice his soul with the things that are unseen; how is God honoured by such a one! The Lord will testify for him, "This man believes me and takes me at my word; he rejoiceth in my promises, before he hath possession; he can be thankful for what his bodily eyes never saw; his rejoicing is not in the flesh; his heart is with me; he loves my presence; and he shall surely enjoy it in my kingdom for ever. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. Them that honour me, I will honour." How did God esteem himself honoured by Caleb and Joshua, when they went

into the promised land, and brought back to their brethren a taste of the fruits, and spake well of the good land, and encouraged the people? What a promise and recompense did they receive?

14. A soul that doth not set its affections on things above, disobeys the commands, and loses the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God. The same God that hath commanded thee to believe, and to be a Christian, hath commanded thee to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and to set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth, Col. iii, 1, 2. The same God that hath forbidden thee to murder, steal, or commit adultery, hath forbidden thee the neglect of this great duty; and darest thou wilfully disobey him? Why not make conscience of one, as well as the other? He hath made it thy duty, as well as the means of thy comfort, that a double bond may engage thee not to forsake thy own mercies. Besides, what are all the most glorious descriptions of heaven, all those discoveries of our future blessedness, and precious promises of our rest, but lost to thee? Are not these the stars in the firmament of Scripture, and the golden lines in that book of God? Methinks thou shouldst not part with one of those promises, no not for a world. A heaven is the perfection of all our mercies; so the promises of it in the gospel, are the very soul of the gospel. Is a comfortable word from the mouth of God of such worth, that all the comforts in the world are nothing to it? And dost thou neglect and overlook so many of them? Why should God reveal so much of his counsel, and tell us beforehand of the joys we shall possess, but to make us know it for our joy? If it had not been to fill us with the delights of our foreknown blessedness, he might have kept his purpose to himself, and never have let us known it till we come to enjoy it. Yea, when we had got possession of our rest, he might still have concealed its eternity from us, and then the fears of losing it would have much diminished the sweetness of our joys. But it hath pleased our Father to open his counsel, and let us know the very intent of his heart, that our joy might be full, and that

we might live as the heirs of such a kingdom. And shall we now overlook all? Shall we live in earthly cares and sorrows, and rejoice no more in these discoveries, than if the Lord had never wrote them? If thy prince had but sealed thee a patent of some lordship, how oft wouldst thou cast thine eye upon it, and make it thy delightful study, till thou shouldst come to possess the dignity itself? And hath God sealed thee a patent of heaven, and dost thou let it lie by thee, as if thou hadst forgot it? O that our hearts were as high as our hopes, and our hopes as high as these invaluable promises!

15. It is but equal that our hearts should be on God, when the heart of God is so much on us. If the Lord of glory can stoop so low, as to set his heart on sinful dust, methinks we should easily be persuaded to set our hearts on Christ and glory, and ascend to him, in our daily affections, who so much condescends to us. Christian, dost thou not perceive that the heart of God is set upon thee, and that he is still minding thee with tender love, even when thou forgettest both thyself and him? Is he not following thee with daily mercies, moving upon thy soul, providing for thy body, preserving both? Doth he not bear thee continually in the arms of love, and promise that all shall work together for thy good, and suit all his dealings to thy greatest advantage, and give his angels charge over thee? And canst thou be taken up with the joys below, and forget thy Lord, who forgets not thee? Unkind ingratitude! When he speaks of his own kindness for us, hear what he says: Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me, Isa. xlix, 14–16. But when he speaks of our regards to him the case is otherwise. Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire; yet my people have forgotten me days without number, Jer. ii, 32. As if he should say, "You will not rise one morning, but you will remember to cover your nakedness, nor forget your vanity of dress; and are these of

more worth than your God; of more importance than your eternal life? And yet you can forget these day after day." Give not God cause thus to expostulate with us. Rather let our souls get up to God, and visit him every morning, and our hearts be towards him every moment.

16. Should not interest in heaven, and our relation to it, continually keep our hearts upon it? There our Father keeps his court. We call him, Our Father who art in heaven. Unworthy children! that can be so taken up in their play, as to be mindless of such a Father. There also is Christ our Head, our Husband, our Life; and shall we not look towards him, and send to him, as oft as we can, till we come to see him face to face? Since the heavens must receive him, until the times of restitution of all things; let them also receive our hearts with him. There also is New Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all, Gal. iv, 26. And there are multitudes of our elder brethren. There are our friends and old acquaintance, whose society, in the flesh, we so much delighted in, and whose departure hence we so much lamented; and is this no attractive to thy thoughts? If they were within thy reach on earth, thou wouldst go and visit them, and why not oftener visit them in spirit, and rejoice beforehand to think of meeting them there? Socrates rejoiced that he should die, because he believed he should see Homer, Hesiod, and other eminent persons. How much more do I rejoice, said a pious old minister, who am sure to see Christ my Saviour, the eternal Son of God, in his assumed flesh; besides so many wise, holy, and renowned patriarchs, prophets, apostles, &c. A believer should look to heaven, and contemplate the blessed state of the saints, and think with himself, "Though I am not yet so happy as to be with you, yet this is my daily comfort, you are my brethren and fellow members in Christ, and therefore your joys are my joys, and your glory by this near relation is my glory; especially while I believe in the same Christ, and hold fast the same faith and obedience, by which you were thus dignified, and rejoice in spirit with you, and congratulate your happiness in my daily meditations.'

17. Moreover, our house and our home is above. For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Why do we then look no oftener towards it, and groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven? 2 Cor. v, 1, 2. If our home were far meaner, sure we should remember it, because it is our home. If you were but banished into a strange land how frequently would your thoughts be at home. And why is it not thus with us in respect of heaven? Is not that more truly and properly our home, where we must take up our everlasting abode, than this which we are every hour expecting to be separated from, and to see no more? We are strangers, and that is our country. We are heirs, and that is our inheritance; even an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, 1 Pet. i, 4. We are here in continual distress and want, and there lies our substance; even a better and enduring substance, Heb. x, 34. Yea the very hope of our souls is there; all our hope of relief from our distresses; all our hope of happiness, when here we are miserable; all this hope is laid up for us in heaven, Col. i, 5. Why, beloved Christians, have we so much interest, and so few thoughts there? So near relation and so little affection! Doth it become us to be delighted in the company of strangers, so as to forget our Father, and our Lord? Or to be so well pleased with those that hate and grieve us, as to forget our best and dearest friends? Or to be so fond of borrowed trifles, as to forget our own possession and treasure? Or to be so much impressed with tears and wants, as to forget our eternal joy and rest? God usually pleads his propriety in us; and thence concludes he will do us good, even because we are his own people whom he hath chosen out of all the world: why then do we not plead our interest in him, and so raise our hearts above; even because he is our own God, and because the place is our own possession? Men commonly over love and over value their own things, and mind them too much. O that we could mind our own inheritance, and value it half as much as it deserves!

18. Once more consider, there is nothing, but heaven, worth setting our hearts upon. If God have them not, who shall? If thou mind not thy rest, what wilt thou mind? Hast thou found out some other God? Or something that will serve thee instead of rest? Hast thou found on earth an eternal happiness? Where is it? What is it made of? Who was the man that found it out? Who was he that last enjoyed it? Where dwelt he? What was his name? Or art thou the first that ever discovered heaven on earth? Ah wretch! trust not to thy discoveries, boast not of thy gain, till experience bid thee boast. Disquiet not thyself, in looking for that which is not on earth; lest thou learn thy experience with the loss of thy soul, which thou mightst have learned on easier terms; even by the warnings of God in his word, and the loss of thousands of souls before thee. If Satan should take thee up to the mountain of temptation, and show thee all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; he could show thee nothing that is worthy thy thoughts, much less to be preferred before thy rest. Indeed, so far as duty and necessity require it, we must be content to mind the things below; but who is he that contains himself within the compass of limits? And yet if we ever so diligently contract our cares and thoughts, we shall find the least to be bitter and burthensome. Christian, see the emptiness of all these things, and the preciousness of the things above. If thy thoughts should, like the laborious bee, go over the world from flower to flower, from creature to creature, they would bring no honey or sweetness home, save what they gathered from their relations to eternity. Though every truth of God is precious, and ought to be defended; yet even all our study of truth should be still in reference to our rest: for the observation is too true, "that the lovers of controversies in religion have never been warmed with one spark of the love of God." And as for minding the affairs of church and state; so far as they illustrate the providence of God, and tend to the settling of the gospel and the government of Christ, and consequently to the saving our own souls, and those of our posterity, they are well worth our diligent observation; but these are

only their relations to eternity. Even all our dealings in the world, our buying and selling, our eating and drinking, our building and marrying, our peace and war, so far as they relate not to the life to come, but tend only to the pleasing of the flesh, are not worthy the frequent thoughts of a Christian. And now doth not thy conscience say, that there is nothing but heaven, and the way to it, that is worth the minding?

19. Now, reader, are these considerations weighty or not? Have I proved it thy duty to keep thy heart on things above, or have I not? If thou say not; I am confident thou contradictest thy own conscience. If thou acknowledge thyself convinced of the duty; that very tongue of thine shall condemn thee, and that confession be pleaded against thee, if thou wilfully neglectest such a confessed duty. Be thoroughly willing, and the work is more than half done. I have now a few plain directions to give you for your help in this great work; but alas! it is in vain to mention them, except you be willing to put them in practice. However, I will propose them to thee, and may the Lord persuade thy heart to the work!

CHAPTER XII.

Directions how to live a heavenly life on earth.

1. Hinderances to a heavenly life must be avoided; such as 2. Living in any known sin; 3. An earthly mind; 4. Ungodly companions; 5. A notional religion; 6. A haughty spirit; 7. A slothful spirit; 8. and resting in preparatives to a heavenly life, without the thing itself. 9. The duties which will promote a heavenly life are these: 10. Be convinced that heaven is the only treasure and happiness; 11, 12. Labour to know your interest in it; 13. And how near it is; 14. Frequently and seriously talk of it; 15. Endeavour in every duty to raise your affections nearer to it; 16. To the same purpose improve every object and event; 17, 18. Be much in the angelical work of praise; 19. Possess your souls with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God; 20. Carefully observe and cherish the motions of the Spirit of God; 21. Nor even neglect the due care of your bodily health.

1. As thou valuest the comforts of a heavenly conversation, I must here charge thee from God, to avoid carefully some dangerous hinderances; and then faithfully and diligently to practise such duties as will especially

assist thee in attaining to a heavenly life. The hinderances to be avoided with all possible care, are, living in any known sin, an earthly mind, the company of the ungodly, a notional religion, a proud and lofty spirit, a slothful spirit, and resting in mere preparation for this heavenly life without any acquaintance with the thing itself.

2. Living in any known sin is a grand impediment to a heavenly conversation. What havoc will this make in thy soul! O the joys that this hath destroyed! The ruin it hath made among men's graces! The soul strengthening duties it hath hindered! Christian reader, art thou one that hast used violence with thy conscience? Art thou a wilful neglecter of known duties, either public, private, or secret? Art thou a slave to thine appetite, or to any other commanding sense? Art thou a proud seeker of thine own esteem? Art thou a peevish and passionate person, ready to take fire at every word, or look, or supposed slight? Art thou a deceiver of others in thy dealings, or one that will be rich, right or wrong? If this be thy case, I dare say heaven and thy soul are very great strangers. These beams in thine eyes will not suffer thee to look to heaven; they will be a cloud between thee and thy God. When thou dost but attempt to study eternity, and gather comforts from the life to come, thy sin will presently look thee in the face, and say, "These things belong not to thee. How shouldst thou take comfort from heaven who takest so much pleasure in the lusts of the flesh?" How will this damp thy joys, and make the thoughts of that day, and state, become thy trouble, and not thy delight? Every wilful sin will be to thy comforts, as water to the fire; when thou thinkest to quicken them, this will quench them. It will utterly indispose and disable thee, that thou canst no more ascend in divine meditation, than a bird can fly when its wings are clipped. Sin cuts the very sinews of this heavenly life. O man! what a life dost thou lose! What daily delights dost thou sell for a vile lust! If heaven and hell can meet together, and God become a lover of sin, then mayst thou live in thy sin, and in the tastes of glory; and have a conversation in heaven, though thou

cherish thy corruption. And take heed lest it banish thee from heaven as it does thy heart. And though thou be not guilty, and knowest no reigning sin in thy soul, think what a sad thing it would be, if ever this should prove thy case. Watch therefore; especially resolve to keep from the occasions of sin, and out of the way of temptations. What need have we daily to pray, Lead us not into temptations but deliver us from evil!

3. An earthly mind is another hinderance to be carefully avoided. God and mammon, earth and heaven cannot both have the delight of thy heart. When the heavenly believer is blessing himself in his God, and rejoicing in hope of the glory to come; perhaps thou art blessing thyself in thy worldly prosperity, and rejoicing in hope of thy thriving here. When he is comforting his soul in the views of Christ, of angels and saints, whom he shall live with for ever; then thou art comforting thyself with thy wealth, in looking over thy bills and bonds, thy goods, thy cattle, or thy buildings, and in thinking of the favour of the great, of the pleasure of a plentiful estate, of larger provision for thy children after thee, of the advancement of thy family, or the increase of thy dependants. If Christ pronounced him a fool, that said, Soul, take thy ease, thou hast enough laid up for many years; how much more so art thou, who knowingly speakest in thy heart the same words? Tell me what difference between this fool's expressions, and thy affections? Remember, thou hast to do with the Searcher of hearts. Certainly, so much as thou delightest and takest up thy rest on earth, so much of thy delight in God is abated. Thine earthly mind may consist with thy outward profession and common duties; but it cannot consist with this heavenly duty. Thou thyself knowest how seldom and cold, how cursory and reserved, thy thoughts have been of the joys above, ever since thou didst trade so eagerly for the world. O the cursed madness of many that seem to be religious! They thrust themselves into a multitude of employments, till they are loaded with labours, and clogged with cares, tha their souls are as unfit to converse with God, as a man to walk with a mountain on his back; and as unapt to

soar in meditation, as their bodies to leap above the sun! And when they have lost that heaven upon earth, which they might have had, they take up with a few rotten arguments to prove it lawful: though, indeed, they cannot. I advise thee, Christian, who hast tasted the pleasures of a heavenly life, as ever thou wouldst taste of them any more, avoid this devouring gulf of an earthly mind. If once thou come to this, that thou wilt be rich, thou fallest into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, 1 Tim. vi, 9. Keep these things loose about thee, like thy upper garments, that thou mayst lay them by whenever there is need; but let God and glory be next thy heart. Ever remember, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God, James iv, 4. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 John ii, 15. This is plain dealing, and happy he that faithfully receives it!

4. Beware of the company of the ungodly. Not that I would dissuade thee from necessary converse, or from doing them any office of love; especially not from endeavouring the good of their souls, as long as thou hast an opportunity or hope: nor would I have thee conclude them to be dogs and swine, in order to evade the duty of reproof: nor even to judge them such at all, as long as there is any hope for the better: much less can I approve of their practice, who conclude men dogs or swine, before ever they faithfully and lovingly admonish them, or perhaps before they have known them, or spoke with them. But it is the unnecessary society of ungodly men, and too much familiarity with unprofitable companions, that I dissuade you from. Not only the open profane, the swearer, the drunkard, and the enemies of godliness, will prove hurtful companions to us, though these indeed are chiefly to be avoided; but too frequent society with persons merely civil and moral, whose conversation is empty and unedifying, may much divert our thoughts from heaven. Our backwardness is such, that we need the most constant and powerful helps. A stone or a clod is as fit to arise and fly in the air, as our hearts

are naturally to move towards heaven. You need not hinder the rocks from flying up to the sky: it is sufficient that you do not help them. And surely if our spirits have not great assistance, they may easily be kept from soaring upward, though they never should meet with the least impediment. O think of this in the choice of your company! When your spirits are so disposed for heaven, that you need no help to lift them up, but as flames, you are always mounting, and carrying with you all that is in your way; then you may, indeed, be less careful of your company; but till then, as you love the delights of a heavenly life, be careful herein. What will it advantage thee in a divine life, to hear how the market goes, or what the weather is, or is like to be, or what news is stirring? This is the discourse of earthly men. What will it conduce to the raising thy heart Godward, to hear that this is an able minister, or that an eminent Christian, or this an excellent sermon, or that an excellent book, or to hear some difficult but unimportant controversy? Yet this, for the most part, is the sweetest discourse thou art like to have from a formal, speculative, dead hearted professor. Nay, if thou hadst newly been warming thy heart in the contemplation of the blessed joys above, would not this discourse benumb thy affections, and quickly freeze thy heart again? I appeal to the judgment of any man that hath tried it, and maketh observations on the frame of his spirit. Men cannot well talk of one thing and mind another, especially things of such different natures. You young men who are most liable to this temptation, think seriously of what I say: can you have your hearts in heaven, among your roaring companions in an ale house, or tavern? Or when you work in your shops with those whose common language is oaths, filthiness, or foolish talking, or jesting? Nay, let me tell you, if you choose such company when you might have better, and find most delight in such, you are so far from a heavenly conversation, that as yet you have no title to heaven at all, and in that state shall never come there. If your treasure was there, your heart could never be on things so distant. In a word, our company will be part of our happiness in heaven.

and it is a singular part of our furtherance to it, or hinderance from it.

5. Avoid frequent disputes about lesser truths, and a religion that lies only in opinions. They are usually least acquainted with a heavenly life, who are violent disputers about the circumstantials of religion. He whose religion is all in his opinions, will be most frequently and zealously speaking his opinions; and he whose religion lies in the knowledge and love of God and Christ, will be most delightfully speaking of that happy time when he shall enjoy them. He is a rare and precious Christian who is skilful to improve well known truths. Therefore let me advise you, who aspire after a heavenly life, not to spend too much of your thoughts, your time, your zeal, or your speech, upon disputes that less concern your souls; but when hypocrites are feeding on husks, or shells, do you feed on the joys above. I wish you were able to defend every truth of God, and to this end would read and study; but still I would have the chief truths to be chiefly studied, and none to cast out your thoughts of eternity. The least controverted points are usually most weighty, and of most necessary frequent use to our souls. Therefore study well such Scripture precepts as these: him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations, Rom. xiv, 1. Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive, 2 Tim. ii, 23, 24. Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contention, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain, Tit. iii, 9. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railing, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself, 1 Tim. vi, 3–5.

6. Take heed of a proud and lofty spirit. There is such an antipathy between this sin and God, that thou wilt never get thy heart near him, nor get him near thy

heart, as long as this prevaileth in it. If it cast the angels out of heaven, it must needs keep thy heart from heaven. If it cast our first parents out of paradise, and separated between the Lord and us, and brought his curse on all the creatures here below; it will certainly keep our hearts from paradise and increase the cursed separation from our God. Intercourse with God will keep men low, and that lowliness will promote their intercourse. When a man is used to be much with God and taken up in the study of his glorious attributes, he abhors himself in dust and ashes; and that self abhorrence is his best preparative to obtain admittance to God again. Therefore after a soul humbling day, or in times of trouble, when the soul is lowest, it useth to have freest access to God, and savour most of the life above. The delight of God is in him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word, Isa. lxvi, 2; and the delight of such a soul is in God; and where there is mutual delight there will be freest admittance, heartiest welcome, and most frequent converse. But God is so far from dwelling in the soul that is proud, that he will not admit it to any near access; the proud he knoweth afar off, Psalm cxxxviii, 6; God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble, 1 Pet. v, 5. A proud mind is high in conceit, self esteem, and carnal aspiring; an humble mind is high, indeed, in God's esteem, and in holy aspiring. These two sorts of high mindedness are most of all opposite to each other, as we see most wars are between princes and princes, and not between a prince and a ploughman. Well then, art thou a man of worth in thine own eyes? Art thou delighted when thou hearest of thy esteem with men, and much dejected when thou hearest that they slight thee? Dost thou love those best that honour thee, and think meanly of them that do not, though they be otherwise men of godliness and honesty? Must thou have thy humours fulfilled, and thy judgment be a rule, and thy word a law to all about thee? Are thy passions kindled if thy word or will be crossed? Art thou ready to judge humility to be sordid baseness, and knowest not how to submit to humble confession, when thou hast sinned against God, or injured

thy brother? Art thou one that lookest strange at the godly poor, and art almost ashamed to be their companion? Canst thou not serve God in a low place, as well as a high? Are thy boastings restrained more by prudence or artifice than humility? Dost thou desire to have all men's eyes upon thee, and to hear them say, "This is he?" Art thou acquainted with the deceitfulness and wickedness of thy heart? Art thou more ready to defend thy innocence, than accuse thyself or confess thy fault? Canst thou hardly bear a close reproof, or digest plain dealing? If these symptoms be undeniable in thy heart, thou art a proud person. There is too much of hell abiding in thee, to have any acquaintance with heaven; thy soul is too proud like the devil to have any familiarity with God. A proud man makes himself his god, and sets up himself as his idol; how then can his affections be set on God? How can he possibly have his heart in heaven? Invention and memory may possibly furnish his tongue with humble and heavenly expressions, but in his spirit there is no more heaven than there is humility. I speak the more of it, because it is the most common and dangerous sin in morality, and most promotes the great sin of infidelity. O Christian! if thou wouldst live continually in the presence of thy Lord, lie in the dust, and he will thence take thee up. Learn of him to be meek and lowly, and thou shalt find rest unto thy soul, Matt. xi, 29. Otherwise thy soul will be like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, Isa. lvii, 20; and instead of these sweet delights in God, thy pride will fill thee with perpetual disquiet. As he that humbleth himself as a little child shall hereafter be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Matt. xviii, 4; so shall he now be greatest in the foretastes of that kingdom. God dwells with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones, Isa. vii, 15. Therefore humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up, James iv, 10. And when others are cast down, then thou shalt say, there is lifting up, and he shall save the humble person, Job xxii, 29.

7. A slothful spirit is another impediment to this hea-

venly life. And I verily think, there is nothing hinders it more than this in men of a good understanding. If it were only the exercise of the body, the moving of the lips, the bending of the knee; men would as commonly step to heaven as they go to visit a friend. But to separate our thoughts and affections from the world, to draw forth all our graces, and increase each in its proper object, and hold them to it till the work prospers in our hand; this, this is the difficulty. Reader, heaven is above hee, and dost thou think to travel this steep ascent without labour and resolution? Canst thou get that earthly heart to heaven, and bring that backward mind to God, while thou liest still, and takest thine ease? If lying down at the foot of a hill, and looking towards the top, and wishing we were there, would serve the turn, we then should have daily travellers for heaven. But the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force, Matt. xi, 12. There must be violence used to get these first fruits, as well as to get the full possession. Dost thou not feel it so, though I should not tell thee? Will thy heart get upwards, except thou drive it? Thou knowest that heaven is all thy hopes, that nothing below can yield thee rest, that a heart seldom thinking of heaven, can fetch but little comfort thence; and yet dost thou not lose thy opportunities, and lie below, when thou shouldst walk above, and live with God? Dost thou not commend the sweetness of a heavenly life, and judge those the best Christians that use it, and yet never try it thyself? As the sluggard that stretches himself on his bed, and cries, O that this were working! So dost thou talk, and trifle, and live at thy ease, and say, O that I could get my heart to heaven! How many read books, and hear sermons, expecting to hear of some easier way, or to meet with a shorter course to comfort, than they are ever like to find in Scripture? Or they ask for directions for a heavenly life, and if the hearing them will serve, they will be heavenly Christians; but if we show them their work, and tell them they cannot have these delights on easier terms, then they leave us, as the young man left Christ, sorrowful. If thou art convinced, reader, that this work is

necessary to thy comfort, set upon it resolutely: if thy heart draw back, force it on with the command of reason: if thy reason begin to dispute, produce the command of God, and urge thy own necessity, with the other considerations suggested in the former chapter. Let not such an incomparable treasure lie before thee, with thy hand n thy bosom; nor thy life be a continual vexation, when t might be a continual feast, only because thou wilt not exert thyself. Sit not still with a disconsolate spirit, while comforts grow before thine eyes, like a man in the midst of a garden of flowers, that will not rise to get them, and partake of their sweetness. This I know, Christ is the fountain: but the well is deep, and thou must get forth this water before thou canst be refreshed with it. I know, so far as you are spiritual, you need not all this striving and violence; but in part you are carnal, and as long as it is so, there is need of labour. It was a custom of the Parthians, not to give their chil dren any meat in the morning, before they saw the sweat on their faces with some labour. And you shall find this to be God's usual course, not to give his children the taste of his delight, till they begin to sweat in seeking after them. Judge therefore whether a heavenly life, or thy carnal ease, be better; and as a wise man make thy choice accordingly. Yet let me add for thy encouragement, thou needest not employ thy thoughts more than thou dost; it is only to fix them upon better and more pleasant objects. Employ but as many serious thoughts every day upon the excellent glory of the life to come, as thou now dost on worldly affairs, yea, on vanities and impertinences, and thy heart will soon be at heaven. On the whole, it is the field of the slothful, that is all grown over with thorns and nettles; and the desire of the slothful killeth his joys, for his hands refuse to labour; and it is the slothful man saith, there is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets. As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom, it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth, Prov. xxiv, 30, 31, xxi, 25. xxvi, 13–15, though it be to feed himself with the food of life What is this but throwing away our own consola-

tions, and consequently the precious blood that bought them? For he that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster, Prov. xviii, 9. Apply this to thy spiritual work, and study well the meaning of it.

8. Contentment with the mere preparatives to this heavenly life, while we are utter strangers to the life itself, is also a dangerous and secret hinderance. When we take up with the mere study of heavenly things, and the notions of them, or the talking with one another about them; as if this were enough to make us heavenly None are in more danger of this snare, than those that are employed in leading the devotions of others, especially preachers of the gospel. O how easily may such be deceived! While they do nothing so much as read and study of heaven; preach, and pray, and talk of heaven; is not this the heavenly life? Alas! all this is but mere preparation: this is but collecting the materials, not erecting the building itself: it is but gathering the manna for others, and not eating and digesting ourselves. As he that sits at home may draw exact maps of countries, and yet never see them, nor travel towards them; so may you describe to others the joys of heaven, and yet never come near it in your own hearts. A blind man, by learning may dispute of light and colours; so may you set forth to others that heavenly light, which never enlightened your own souls, and bring that fire for the hearts of your people, which never warmed your own hearts. What heavenly passages had Balaam in his prophecies, yet how little of it in his spirit! Nay, we are under a more subtle temptation than any other men, to draw us from this heavenly life. Studying and preaching of heaven more resembles a heavenly life, than thinking and talking of the world does; and the resemblance is apt to deceive us. This is to die the most miserable death, even to famish ourselves because we have bread on our tables; and to die for thirst while we draw water for others, thinking it enough that we have daily to do with it, though we never drink for the refreshment of our own souls.

9. Having thus showed thee what hinderances will resist thee in the work, I expect that thou resolve against

them, consider them seriously, and avoid them faithfully, or else thy labour will be in vain. I must also tell thee, that I here expect thy promise, as thou valuest the delights of these foretastes of heaven, to make conscience of performing the following duties; the reading of which without their constant practice, will not bring heaven into thy heart. Particularly, be convinced that heaven is the only pleasure and happiness; labour to know that it is thy own, and how near it is; frequently and seriously talk of it; endeavour to raise thy affections nearer to it in every duty; to the same purpose improve every object and event; be much in the angelical work of praise; possess thy soul with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God; carefully observe and cherish the motion of the Spirit of God; nor even neglect the due care of thy bodily health.

10. Be convinced that heaven is the only treasure and happiness, and labour to know what a treasure and happiness it is. If thou do not believe it to be the chief good, thou wilt never set thy heart upon it; and this conviction must sink into thy affections; for if it be only a notion, it will have little efficacy. If Eve once supposes she sees more worth in the forbidden fruit, than in the love and enjoyment of God, no wonder if it have more of her heart than God. If your judgment once prefers the delights of the flesh, before the delights in the presence of God, it is impossible your hearts should be in heaven. As it is ignorance of the emptiness of things below, that makes men so overvalue them; so it is ignorance of the high delights above, which is the cause that men so little mind them. If you see a purse of gold, and believe it to be but counters, it will not entice your affections to it. It is not the real excellence of a thing itself, but its known excellence, that excites desire. If an ignorant man see a book, containing the secrets of arts or sciences, he values it no more than a common piece, because he knows not what is in it; but he that knows it highly values it, and can even forbear his meat, drink, and sleep, to read it. As the Jews killed the Messiah, while they waited for him, because they did not know him; so the world cries out for rest, and busily

seeks for delight and happiness, because they know it not; for did they thoroughly know what it is, they could not so slight the everlasting treasure.

11. Labour also to know that heaven is thy own happiness. We may confess heaven to be the best condition, though we despair of enjoying it; and we may desire and seek it, if we see the attainment but probable; but we can never delightfully rejoice in it, till we are in some measure persuaded of our title to it. What comfort is it to a man that is naked, to see the rich attire of others? What delight is it for a man that hath not a house to put his head in, to see the sumptuous buildings of others? Would not all this rather increase his anguish, and make him more sensible of his own misery? So for a man to know the excellencies of heaven, and not know whether he shall ever enjoy them, may raise desire, and urge pursuit, but he will have little joy. Who will set his heart on another man's possessions? If your houses, your goods, your cattle, your children, were not your own, you would less mind them, and less delight in them. O Christian! rest not therefore till you can call this rest your own: bring thy heart to the bar of trial: set the qualifications of the saints on one side, and of thy soul on the other, and then judge how near they resemble. Thou hast the same word to judge thyself by now, as thou must be judged by at the great day. Mistake not the Scripture's description of a saint, that thou neither acquit nor condemn thyself upon mistakes. For as groundless hopes tend to confusion, and are the greatest cause of most men's damnation; so groundless doubts tend to, and are the great cause of, the saint's perplexity and distress. Therefore lay thy foundation for trial safely, and proceed in the work deliberately and resolutely, nor give over till thou canst say, either thou hast, or hast not yet, a title to this rest. O if men did truly know, that God is their own Father, and Christ their own Redeemer and head, and that those are their own everlasting habitations, and that there they must abide and be happy for ever; how could they choose but be transported with the forethoughts thereof? If a Christian could but look upon sun, moon, and stars, and reckon all his own in Christ,

and say, "These are the blessings that my Lord hath procured me, and things incomparably greater than these;" what holy raptures would his spirit feel?

12. The more do they sin against their own comforts, as well as against the grace of the gospel, who plead for their unbelief, and cherish distrustful thoughts of God and injurious thoughts of their Redeemer; who represent the covenant, as if it were of works, and not of grace; and Christ as an enemy, rather than a Saviour; as if he were willing they should die in their unbelief, when he hath invited them so often and so affectionately, and suffered the agonies that they should suffer. Wretches that we are! to be keeping up jealousies of our Lord, when we should be rejoicing in his love. As if any man could choose Christ, before Christ hath chosen him, or any man were more willing to be happy, than Christ is to make him happy. Away with these injurious, if not blasphemous thoughts! if ever thou hast harboured such thoughts in thy breast, cast them from thee, and take heed how thou ever entertainest them more. God hath written the names of his people in heaven, as you use to write your names, or marks, on your goods; and shall we be attempting to raze them out, and to write our names on the doors of hell? But blessed be God, whose foundation standeth sure, 2 Tim. ii, 19; and who keepeth us by his power through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. i, 5.

13. Labour to apprehend how near thy rest is. What we think near at hand we are more sensible of, than that which we behold at a distance. When judgments or mercies are far off, we talk of them with little concern; but when they draw close to us we tremble at or rejoice in them. This makes men think on heaven so insensibly, because they conceit it at too great a distance; they look on it as twenty, thirty, or forty years off. How much better were it to receive the sentence of death in ourselves, 2 Cor. i, 9, and to look on eternity as near a hand? While I am thinking and writing of it, it hasteth near, and I am even entering into it before I am aware. While thou art reading this, whoever thou art, time posteth on, and thy life will be gone as a tale that is told. If you verily believed you should die to-morrow, how

seriously would you think of heaven to-night! When Samuel had told Saul, To-morrow shalt thou be with me; this struck him to the heart. And if Christ should say to a believing soul, To-morrow shalt thou be with me; this would bring him in spirit to heaven beforehand. Do but suppose that you are still entering into heaven, and it will greatly help you more seriously to mind it.

14. Let thy eternal rest be the subject of thy frequent serious discourse; especially with those that can speak from their hearts, and are seasoned themselves with a heavenly nature. It is pity Christians should ever meet together, without some talk of their meeting in heaven, or of the way to it, before they part: it is pity so much time is spent in vain conversation, and useless disputes, and not a serious word of heaven among them. Methinks we should meet together on purpose to warm our spirits with discoursing of our rest. To hear a Christian set forth that blessed, glorious state, with life and power, from the promises of the gospel; methinks should make us say, Did not our hearts burn within us while he opened to us the Scriptures? Luke xxiv, 32. If a Felix will tremble, when he hears his judgment powerfully represented, why should not the believer be revived when he hears his eternal rest described? Wicked men can be delighted in talking together of their wickedness; and should not Christians then be delighted in talking of Christ? and the heirs of heaven in talking of their inheritance? This may make our hearts revive, as it did Jacob's to hear the message that called him to Goshen, and to see the chariots that should bring him to Joseph. O that we were furnished with skill and resolution, to turn the stream of men's common discourse to these more sublime and precious things! And when men begin to talk of things unprofitable, that we could tell how to put in a word for heaven, and say as Peter of his bodily food, Not so, for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean! O the good that we might both do and receive by this course! Had it not been to deter us from unprofitable conversation, Christ would not have talked of our giving an account of every idle word in the day of judgment, Matt. xii, 36. Say then,

as the psalmist, when you are in company, Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy, Psalm cxxxvii, 6. Then you shall find it true, that a wholesome tongue is a tree of life, Prov. xv, 4.

15. Endeavour, in every duty, to raise thy affections nearer to heaven. God's end in the institution of his ordinances was, that they should be as so many steps to advance us to our rest, and by which, in subordination to Christ, we might daily ascend in our affections. Let this be thy end in using them, and doubtless they will not be unsuccessful. How have you been rejoiced by a few lines from a friend, when you could not see him face to face! And may we not have intercourse with God in his ordinances, though our persons be yet so far remote? May not our spirits rejoice in reading those lines which contain our legacy and character for heaven? With what gladness and triumph may we read the expressions of divine love, and hear of our celestial country, though we have not yet the happiness to behold it? Men that are separated by sea and land, can by letters carry on great and gainful trades; and may not a Christian, in the wise improvement of duties, drive on this happy trade for rest? Come then, renounce formality, custom, and applause, and kneel down in secret or public prayer, with hope to get thy heart nearer to God before thou risest up. When thou openest thy Bible, or other book, hope to meet with some passage of divine truth, and such blessing of the Spirit with it, as will give thee a fuller taste of heaven. When thou art going to the house of God, say, "I hope to meet with somewhat from God to raise my affections, before I return; I hope the Spirit will give me the meeting, and sweeten my heart with those celestial delights; I hope Christ will appear to me in that way, and shine about me with light from heaven, let me hear his instructing and reviving voice, and cause the scales to fall from my eyes, that I may see more of that glory than I ever yet saw. I hope, before I return, my Lord will bring my heart within the view of rest, and set it before his Father's presence, that I may return, as the shepherds from the heavenly vision, glorifying and praising God,

for all the things I have heard and seen." When the Indians first saw that the English could converse together by letters, they thought there was some spirit enclosed in them. So would bystanders admire when Christians have communion with God in duties, what there is in those scriptures, in that sermon, in this prayer, that fills their hearts so full of joy, and so transports them above themselves. Certainly God would not fail us in our duties, if we did not fail ourselves. Remember, therefore, always to pray for your minister that God would put some divine message into his mouth. which may leave a heavenly relish on your spirit.

16. Improve every object and every event, to mind thy soul of its approaching rest. As all providences and creatures are means to our rest, so they point us to that as their end. God's sweetest dealings with us at the present, would not be half so sweet as they are, if they did not intimate some further sweetness. Thou takest but the bare earnest, and overlookest the main sum, when thou receivest thy mercies, and forgettest thy crown. O that Christians were skilful in this art! You can open your Bibles; learn to open the volumes of creatures and providences, to read there also of God and glory. Thus we might have a fuller taste of Christ and heaven in every common meal, than most men have in a sacrament. If thou prosper in the world, let it make thee more sensible of thy perpetual prosperity. If thou art weary with labour, let it make the thoughts of thy eternal rest more sweet. If things go cross, let thy desires be more earnest to have sorrows and sufferings for ever cease. Is thy body refreshed with food or sleep? remember the inconceivable refreshment with Christ. Dost thou hear any good news? remember what glad tidings t will be, to hear the trump of God, and the applauding sentence of Christ. Art thou delighted with the society of the saints? remember what the perfect society in heaven will be. Is God communicating himself to thy spirit? remember the time of thy highest advancement, when both thy communion and joy shall be full. Dost thou hear the raging noise of the wicked, and the confusions of the world? think of the blessed harmony in

heaven. Dost thou hear the tempest of war? remember the day when thou shalt be in perfect peace, under the wings of the Prince of peace for ever. Thus every condition and creature affords us advantages for a heavenly life, if we had but hearts to improve them.

17. Be much in the angelical work of praise. The more heavenly the employment, the more will it make the spirit heavenly. Praising God is the work of angels and saints in heaven, and will be our own everlasting work; and if we were more in it now, we should be liker to what we shall be then. As desire, faith, and hope, are of shorter continuance than love and joy; so also preaching, prayer, and sacraments, and all means for expressing and confirming our faith and hope, shall cease, when our triumphant expressions of love and joy shall abide for ever. The liveliest emblem of heaven that I know upon earth, is when the people of God, in the deep sense of his excellency and bounty, from hearts abounding with love and joy, join together both in heart and voice, in the cheerful and melodious singing of his praises. These delights, like the testimony of the Spirit, witness themselves to be of God, and bring the evidence of their heavenly parentage along with them.

18. Little do we know how we wrong ourselves by shutting out of our prayers the praises of God, or allowing them so narrow a room as we usually do, while we are copious enough in our confessions and petitions. Reader, I entreat thee, remember this, let praises have a larger room in thy duties; keep matter ready at hand to feed thy praise, as well as matter for confession and petition. To this end, study the excellencies and goodness of the Lord, as frequently as thy own wants and unworthiness; the mercies thou hast received, and those which are promised, as often as the sins thou hast committed. Praise is comely for the upright. Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth God. Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good; ing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant, Psa. xxxiii, 1, l, 23, cxxxv, 3. Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruits of our lips, giving thanks to his name, Heb. xiii, 15. Had not David a most heavenly spirit, who was so much in this heavenly work!

Doth it not sometimes raise our hearts, when we only read the song of Moses, and the psalms of David? How much more would it raise and refresh us, to be skilful and frequent in the work ourselves? O the madness of youth, that lay out their vigour of body and mind upon vain delights and fleshly lusts, which is so unfit for the noblest work of man? And O the sinful folly of many of the saints, who drench their spirits in continual sadness and waste their days in complaints and groans, and so make themselves, both in body and mind, unfit for this sweet and heavenly work! Instead of joining with the people of God in his praises, they are questioning their worthiness, and studying their miseries; and so rob God of his glory, and themselves of their consolation. But the greatest destroyer of our comfort in this duty, is our taking up with the tune and melody, and suffering the heart to be idle, which ought to perform the principal part of the work, and use the melody to revive and exhilarate itself.

19. Ever keep thy soul possessed with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God. Love is the attractive of love. Few so vile, but will love those that love them. No doubt it is the death of our heavenly life, to have hard thoughts of God, to conceive of him as one that would rather damn than save us. This is to put the blessed God into the similitude of Satan. When our ignorance and unbelief have drawn the most deformed picture of God in our imaginations, then we complain that we cannot love him, nor delight in him. This is the case of many thousand Christians. Alas, that we should thus blaspheme God, and blast our own joys! Scripture assures us, that God is love, John iv, 16; that fury is not in him, Isa. xxvii, 4; that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live, Ezek. xxxiii, 11. Much more hath he testified his love to his chosen, and his full resolution effectually to save them. O that we could always think of God, as we do of a friend; as of one that unfeignedly loves us, even more than we do ourselves; whose very heart is set upon us to do us good, and hath therefore provided for us an everlasting dwelling with himself: it would not then be

so hard to have our hearts ever with him! Where we love most heartily, we shall think most sweetly, and most freely. I fear most Christians think higher of the love of a hearty friend, than of the love of God; and what wonder then if they love their friends better than God, and trust them more confidently than God, and would rather live with them than with God?

20. Carefully observe and cherish the motions of the Spirit of God. If ever thy soul get above this earth, and get acquainted with this heavenly life, the Spirit of God must be to thee as the chariot to Elijah; yea, the very living principle by which thou must move and ascend. O then, grieve not thy guide, quench not thy life, knock not off thy chariot wheels! You little think how much the life of all your graces, and the happiness of your souls, depend upon your ready and cordial obedience to the Spirit. When the Spirit urges thee to secret prayer; or forbids thee thy known transgressions; or points out to thee the way in which thou shouldst go: and thou wilt not regard, no wonder if heaven and thy soul be strange. If thou wilt not follow the Spirit, while it would draw thee to Christ and thy duty; how should it lead thee to heaven, and bring thy heart into the presence of God? What supernatural help, what bold access, shall the soul find in its approaches to the Almighty, that constantly obeys the Spirit? And how backward, how dull, how ashamed, will he be in these addresses, who hath often broke away from the Spirit that would have guided him? Christian reader, dost thou not feel sometimes a strong impression to retire from the world, and draw near to God? Do not disobey, but take the offer, and hoist up thy sails while this blessed gale may be had. The more of this Spirit we resist, the deeper will it wound; and the more we obey, the speedier will be our pace.

21. I advise thee as a farther help to this heavenly life, not to neglect the due care of thy bodily health. Thy body is a useful servant, if thou give it its due, and no more than its due; but it is a most devouring tyrant, if thou suffer it to have what it unreasonably desires; and it is as a blunted knife if thou unjustly deny it what is necessary to its support. When we consider how fre-

quently men offend on both extremes, and how few use their bodies aright, we cannot wonder if they be much hindered in their converse with heaven. Most men are slaves to their appetite, and can scarce deny any thing to the flesh, and are therefore willingly carried by it to their sports, or profits, or vain companions, when they should raise their minds to God and heaven. As you love your souls, make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, Rom. xiii, 14; but remember, to be carnally minded is death; because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live, Rom. viii, 6–8, 12, 13. There are a few who much hinder their heavenly joy, by denying the body its necessaries, and so making it unable to serve them: if such wronged their flesh only, it would be no great matter; but they wrong their souls also; as he that spoils the house, injures the inhabitants. When the body is sick, and the spirits languish, how heavily do we move in the thoughts and joys of heaven!

CHAPTER XIII.

The nature of heavenly contemplation; with the time, place, and temper, fittest for it.

The duty of heavenly contemplation is recommended to the reader, 2. And defined: 3–6. The definition is illustrated; 7. The time fittest for it is represented, as 8. Stated; 9–12. Frequent; 13. and Seasonable, every day, and particularly every Lord's day; 14–17. But more especially, when our hearts are warmest with a sense of divine things; or when we are afflicted or tempted; or when we are near death: 18. The fittest place for it is the most retired; 19. And the fittest temper for it is, 20. When our minds are most clear of the world, 21. And most solemn and serious.

1. Once more I entreat thee, reader, as thou makest conscience of a revealed duty, and darest not wilfully resist the Spirit; as thou valuest the high delights of a saint, and the soul ravishing exercise of heavenly con-

templation; that thou diligently study, and speedily and faithfully practise, the following directions. If, by this means, thou dost not find an increase of all thy graces, and dost not grow beyond the stature of common Christians, and art not made more serviceable in thy place, and more precious in the eyes of all discerning persons, if thy soul enjoy not more communion with God, and thy life be not fuller of comfort, and hast it not readier by thee at a dying hour; then cast away these directions, and exclaim against me for ever as a deceiver.

2. The duty which I press upon thee so earnestly, and in the practice of which I am now to direct thee is, "The set and solemn acting of all the powers of my soul in meditation upon thy everlasting rest." More fully to explain the nature of this duty, I will here illustrate a little the description itself; then point out the fittest time, place, and temper of mind for it.

3. It is not improper to illustrate a little the manner in which we have described this duty of meditation, or the considering and contemplating of spiritual things. It is confessed to be a duty by all, but practically denied by most. Many that make conscience of other duties, easily neglect this; they are troubled if they omit a sermon, a fast, or a prayer, in public or private; yet were never troubled that they have omitted meditation perhaps all their life time to this very day; though it be that duty, by which all other duties are improved, and by which the soul digesteth truths for its nourishment and comfort. It was God's command to Joshua, This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayst observe to do according to all that is written therein, Josh. i, 8. As digestion turns food into chyle and blood, for vigorous health; so meditation turns the truths received and remembered into warm affection, firm resolution, and holy conversation.

4. This meditation is the acting of all the powers of the soul. It is the work of the living, and not of the dead. It is a work of all others the most spiritual and sublime, and therefore not to be well performed by a heart that is merely carnal and earthly. They must

necessarily have some relation to heaven, before they can familiarly converse there. I suppose them to be such as have a title to rest, when I persuade them to rejoice in the meditations of rest. And supposing thee to be a Christian, I am now exhorting thee to be an active Christian. And it is the work of the soul I am setting thee to, for bodily exercise doth here profit but little. And it must have all the powers of thy soul to distin guish it from the common meditation of students; for th understanding is not the whole soul, and therefore can not do the whole work. As in the body, the stomach must turn the food into chyle, and prepare for the liver, the liver and spleen turn it into blood, and prepare for the heart and brain; so in the soul, the understanding must take in truths, and prepare them for the will, and that for the affections. Christ and heaven have various excellencies, and therefore God hath formed the soul with different powers for apprehending those excellencies. What the better had we been for odoriferous flowers, if we had no smell? Or what good would language or music have done us, if we could not hear? Or what pleasure should we have found in meats and drinks, without the sense of taste? So, what good could all the glory of heaven have done us, or what pleasure should we have had in the perfections of God himself, if we had been without the affections of love and joy? And what strength or sweetness canst thou possibly receive by thy meditations on eternity, while thou dost not exercise those affections of the soul, by which thou must be sensible of this sweetness and strength? It is the mistake of Christians, to think that meditation is only the work of the understanding and memory; when every school boy can do this, or persons that hate the things which they think on. So that you see there is more to be done than barely to remember and think of heaven; as some labours not only stir a hand or a foot, but exercise the whole body; so doth meditation the whole soul. As the affections of sinners are set on the world, are turned to idols, and fallen from God, as well as their understanding; so must their affections be reduced to God, as well as the understanding; and as their whole soul was filled with

sin before, so the whole must be filled with God now. See David's description of the blessed man. His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night, Psalm i, 2.

5. The meditation is set and solemn. As there is solemn prayer, when we wholly set ourselves to that duty; and ejaculatory prayer, when in the midst of other business we send up some short request to God: so also there is olemn meditation when we apply ourselves wholly to that work; and transient meditation, when in the midst of other business we have some good thoughts of God in our minds. And as solemn prayer is either set, in a constant course of duty; or occasional, at an extraordinary season; so also is meditation. Now, though I would persuade you to that meditation, which is mixed with your common labours, and also that which special occasions direct you to; yet I would have you likewise make it a constant standing duty, as you do by hearing, pray ing, and reading the Scriptures; and no more intermix other matters with it, than you would with prayer, or other stated solemnities.

6. This meditation is upon thy everlasting rest. I would not have you cast off your other meditation; but surely as heaven hath the pre-eminence in perfection, it should have it also in our meditations. That which will make us most happy when we possess it, will make us most joyful when we meditate upon it. Other meditations are as numerous as there are lines in the Scripture, or creatures in the universe, or particular providences in the government of the world. But this is a walk to mount Sion; from the kingdom of this world, to the kingdom of saints; from earth to heaven; from time to eternity; it is a walking upon sun, moon, and stars, in the garden and paradise of God. It may seem far off; but spirits are quick; whether in the body or out of the body, their motion is swift. You need not fear like the men of the world, lest these thoughts should make you mad. It is heaven, and not hell, that I persuade you to walk in. It is joy, and not sorrow, that I persuade you to exercise. I urge you to look on no deformed objects, but only upon the ravishing glory of saints, and the un-

speakable excellencies of the God of glory, and the beams that stream from the face of his Son. Will it distract a man to think of his only happiness? Will it distract the miserable to think of mercy, or the prisoner to foresee deliverance, or the poor to think of approaching riches and honour? Methinks it should rather make a man mad, to think of living in a world of wo, and abiding in poverty and sickness, among the rage of wicked men; than to think of living with Christ in bliss. But wisdom is justified of all her children, Luke vii, 35. Knowledge hath no enemy but the ignorant. This heavenly course was never spoken against by any, but those that never knew it, or never used it. I fear more the neglect of men that approve it, than the opposition or arguments of any against it.

7. As to the fittest time for this heavenly contemplation, let me only advise that it be stated, frequent, and seasonable.

8. Give it a stated time. If thou suit thy time to the advantage of the work, without placing any religion in the time itself, thou hast no need to fear superstition. Stated time is a hedge to duty, and defends it against many temptations to omission. Some have not their time at command, and therefore cannot set their hours; and many are so poor, that the necessities of their families deny them this freedom; such persons should be watchful to redeem time as much as they can, and take their vacant opportunities as they fall, and especially join meditation and prayer, as much as they can, with the labours of their callings. Yet those that have more time to spare from their worldly necessities, and are masters of their time, I still advise to keep this duty to a stated time. And indeed, if every work of the day had its appointed time, we should be better skilled, both in redeeming time, and in performing duty.

9. Let it be frequent as well as stated. How oft it should be I cannot determine, because men's circumstances differ. But in general, Scripture requires it to be frequent, when it mentions meditating day and night. For those, therefore, who can conveniently omit other business, I advise that it be once a day at least. Fre

quency in heavenly contemplation is particularly important,

10. To prevent a shyness between God and thy soul Frequent society breeds familiarity, and familiarity increases love and delight, and makes us bold in our addresses. The chief end of this duty is to have acquaintance and fellowship with God, and therefore if thou come but seldom to it, thou wilt keep thyself a stranger still. When a man feels his need of God, and must seek his help in a time of necessity, then it is great encouragement to go to a God we know, and are acquainted with. "O!" saith the heavenly Christian, "I know both whither I go and to whom. I have gone this way many a time before now. It is the same God that I daily converse with: and the way has been my daily walk. God knows me well enough, and I have some knowledge of him." On the other side, what a horror and discouragement will it be to the soul, when it is forced to fly to God in straights, to think, "Alas! I know not whither I go. I never went the way before. I have no acquaintance at the court of heaven. My soul knows not that God that I must speak to, and I fear he will not know my soul." But especially when we come to die, and must immediately appear before this God, and expect to enter into his eternal rest, then the difference will plainly appear; then what a joy will it be to think, "I am going to the place that I daily conversed in; to the place from whence I tasted such frequent delights; to that God whom I have met in my meditation so often. My heart hath been at heaven before now, and hath often tasted its reviving sweetness; and if my eyes were so enlightened and my spirits so refreshed, when I had but a taste, what will it be when I shall feed on it freely?" On the contrary, what a terror will it be to think, "I must die, and go I know not whither; from a place where I am acquainted to a place where I have no familiarity or knowledge!" It is inexpressible horror to a dying man to have strange thoughts of God and heaven. I am persuaded the neglect of this duty so commonly makes death, even to godly men, unwelcome and uncomfortable. Therefore I per-

suade to frequency in this duty. And as it will prevent shyness between thee and God, so also,

11. It will prevent unskilfulness in the duty itself. How awkwardly do men set their hands to a work they are seldom employed in? Whereas frequency will habituate thy heart to the work, and make it more easy and delightful. The hill which made thee pant and blow at first going up, thou mayst easily run up, when thou ar ance accustomed to it.

12. Thou wilt also prevent the loss of that heat and life thou hast obtained. If thou eat but once in two or three days, thou wilt lose thy strength as fast as it comes. If in holy meditation thou get near to Christ, and warm thy heart with the fire of love, and then come but seldom, thy former coldness will soon return; especially as the work is so spiritual, and against the bent of depraved nature. It is true the intermixing of other duties, especially secret prayer, may do much to the keeping thy heart above: but meditation is the life of most other duties, and the view of heaven is the life of meditation.

13. Choose also the most seasonable time. All things are beautiful and excellent in their season. Unseasonableness may lose the fruit of thy labour, may raise difficulties in the work, and may turn a duty to sin. The same hour may be seasonable to one, and unseasonable to another. Servants and labourers must take that season which their business will best afford: either while at work, or in travelling, or when they lie awake in the night. Such as can choose what time of the day they will, should observe, when they find their spirits most active and fit for contemplation, and fix upon that as the stated time. I have always found that the fittest time for myself is the evening, from sunsetting to the twilight. I the rather mention this, because it was the experience of a better and wiser man; for it is expressly said, Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide, Gen. xxiv, 63. The Lord's day is exceeding seasonable for this exercise. When should we more seasonably contemplate on rest, than on that day of rest which typifies it to us? It being a day appropriated to spiritual duties,

methinks we should never exclude this duty which is so eminently spiritual. I verily think this is the chief work of a Christian sabbath, and most agreeable to the design of its positive institution. What fitter time to converse with our Lord, than on the Lord's day? What fitter day to ascend to heaven, than that on which he arose from earth, and fully triumphed over death and hell. The fittest temper for a true Christian, is like John, to be in the Spirit on the Lord's day, Rev. i, 10. And what can bring us to this joy in the Spirit, but the spiritual beholding of our approaching glory? Take notice of this, you that spend the Lord's day only in public worship; your allowing no time to private duty, and therefore neglecting this spiritual duty of meditation, is very hurtful to your souls. You also that have time on the Lord's day for idleness and vain discourse, were you but acquainted with this duty of contemplation, you would need no other pastime; you would think the longest day short enough, and be sorry that the night hath shortened your pleasure. Christians, let heaven have more share in your sabbaths, where you must shortly keep your everlasting sabbath. Use your sabbaths as steps to glory, till you have passed them all, and are there arrived. Especially you that are poor, and cannot take time in the week as you desire, see that you well improve this day; as your bodies rest from their labours, let your spirits seek after rest from God.

14. Besides the constant seasonableness of every day, and particularly every Lord's day, there are also more peculiar seasons for heavenly contemplation. As for instance,

15. When God hath more abundantly warmed thy spirit with fire from above. Then thou mayst soar with greater freedom. A little labour will set thy heart a going at such a time as this; whereas, at another time thou mayst take pains to little purpose. Observe the gales of the Spirit, and how the spirit of Christ doth move thy spirit. Without Christ we can do nothing; and therefore let us be doing while he is doing; and be sure not to be out of the way nor asleep when he comes. When the Spirit finds thy heart, like Peter, in prison,

and in irons, and smites thee, and says, Arise up quickly, and follow me; be sure thou then arise, and follow, and thou shalt find thy chains fall off, and all doors will open, and thou wilt be at heaven before thou art aware.

16. Another peculiar season for this duty is when thou art in a suffering, distressed, or tempted state. When would we take our cordials but in times of fainting? When is it more seasonable to walk to heaven, than when we know not in what corner of earth to live with comfort? Or when should our thoughts converse more above, than when they have nothing but grief below? Where should Noah's dove be but in the ark, when the waters cover all the earth, and she cannot find rest for the sole of her foot? What should we think on, but our Father's house, when we have not even the husks of the world to feed upon? Surely God sends thy afflictions to this very purpose. Happy art thou, poor man, if thou make this use of thy poverty! and thou that art sick, if thou so improve thy sickness! It is seasonable to go to the promised land, when our burdens are increased in Egypt, and our straits in the wilderness. Reader, if thou knewest what a cordial to thy griefs the serious views of glory are, thou wouldst less fear these harmless troubles, and more use that preserving, reviving remedy. In the multitude of my troubled thoughts within me, saith David, thy comforts delight my soul, Psalm xciv, 19. I reckon, saith Paul, that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, Rom. viii, 18. For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal, 2 Cor. iv, 16–18.

17. And another season peculiarly fit for this heavenly duty is, when the messengers of God summon us to die When should we most frequently sweeten our souls with the believing thoughts of another life, than when we find

that this is almost ended? No men have greater need of supporting joys, than dying men; and those joys must be fetched from our eternal joy. As heavenly delights are sweetest, when nothing earthly is joined with them; so the delights of dying Christians are oftentimes the sweetest they ever had. What a prophetical blessing had dying Isaac and Jacob for their sons? With what a heavenly song, and divine benediction, did Moses conclude his life? What heavenly advice and prayer had he disciples from their Lord, when he was about to leave them? When Paul was ready to be offered up, what heavenly exhortation and advice did he give the Philippians, Timothy, and the elders of Ephesus? How near to heaven was John in Patmos, but a little before his translation thither? It is the general temper of the saints to be then most heavenly, when they are nearest to heaven. If it be thy case, reader, to perceive thy dying time draw on, O where should thy heart now be but with Christ! Methinks thou shouldst even behold him standing by thee, and should bespeak him as thy father, thy husband, thy physician, thy friend. Methinks thou shouldst as it were see the angels about thee, waiting to perform their last office to thy soul; even those angels which disdained not to carry into Abraham's bosom the soul of Lazarus, nor will think much to conduct thee thither. Look upon thy pain and sickness, as Jacob did on Joseph's chariots, and let thy spirit revive within thee, and say, It is enough, Christ is yet alive; because he lives I shall live also! John xiv, 19. Dost thou need the choicest cordials? Here are choicer than the world can afford; here are all the joys of heaven, even the vision of God and Christ, and whatsoever the blessed there possess! these dainties are offered thee by the hand of Christ; he hath written the receipt in the promises of the gospel; he hath prepared the ingredients in heaven; only put forth the hand of faith, and feed upon them, and rejoice and live. The Lord saith to thee, as to Elijah, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. Though it be not long, yet the way is miry; therefore obey his voice, arise and eat, and in the strength of that meat thou mayst go to the mount

of God; and like Moses, die in the mount whither thou goest up; and say, as Simeon, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for my eye of faith hath seen thy salvation, Luke ii, 29, 30.

18. Concerning the fittest place for heavenly contemplation, it is sufficient to say, that the most convenient is some private retirement. Our spirits need every help, and to be freed from every hinderance in our work. In private prayer, Christ directs us to enter into our closet, and shut the door, that our Father may see us in secret, Matt. vi, 6, so should we do in this meditation How often did Christ himself retire to some mountain, or wilderness, or other solitary place? I give not this advice for occasional meditation, but for that which is set and solemn. Therefore withdraw thyself from all society, even the society of godly men, that thou mayst a while enjoy the society of thy Lord. If a student cannot study in a crowd, who exerciseth only his invention and memory; much less shouldst thou be in a crowd, who art to exercise all the powers of thy soul, and upon an object so far above nature. We are fled so far from superstitious solitude, that we have even cast off the solitude of contemplative devotion. We seldom read of God's appearing by himself, or by his angels, to any of his prophets or saints in a crowd; but frequently when they were alone. But observe for thyself, what place best agrees with thy spirit; whether within doors, or without. Isaac's example, in going out to meditate in the field, will I believe best suit with most. Our Lord so much used a solitary garden, that even Judas, when he came to betray him, knew where to find him: and though he took his disciples thither with him, yet he was withdrawn from them for more secret devotion, John xviii, 1, 2; Luke xxii, 41: and though his meditations be not directly named, but only his praying, yet it is very clearly implied; for his soul is first made sorrowful with the bitter meditations on his sufferings and death, and then he poured it out in prayer, Mark xiv, 34, 35. So that Christ had his accustomed place, and consequently accustomed duty, and so must we; he hath a place that is solitary, whither he retireth himself, even from his own disciples.

and so must we; his meditations go further than his thoughts, they affect and pierce his heart and soul, and so must ours. Only there is a wide difference in the object; Christ meditates on the sufferings that our sins had deserved, so that the wrath of his Father passed through all his soul: but we are to meditate on the glory he hath purchased, that the love of the Father, and the joy of the Spirit, may enter at our thoughts and revive our affections, and overflow our souls.

19. I am next to advise thee concerning the preparations of thy heart for this heavenly contemplation. The success of the work much depends on the frame of thy heart. When man's heart had nothing in it to grieve the Spirit, it was then the delightful habitation of his Maker. God did not quit his residence there, till man expelled him by unworthy provocations. There was no shyness or reserve, till the heart grew sinful, and too loathsome a dungeon for God to delight in. And was this soul reduced to its former innocency, God would quickly return to his former habitation; yea, so far as it is renewed and repaired by the Spirit, and purged from its lusts, and beautified with his image, the Lord will yet acknowledge it his own; Christ will manifest himself unto it, and the Spirit will take it for his temple and residence. So far as the heart is qualified for conversing with God, so far it usually enjoys him. Therefore, with all diligence keep thy heart, for out of it are the issues of life, Prov. iv, 23. More particularly,

20. Get thy heart as clear from the world as thou canst. Wholly lay by the thoughts of thy business, troubles, enjoyments, and every thing that may take up any room in thy soul. Get it as empty as thou possibly canst, that it may be the more capable of being filled with God. If thou couldst perform some outward duty with a piece of thy heart, while the other is absent, yet this above all I am sure thou canst not. When thou shalt go into the mount of contemplation, thou wilt be like the covetous man at the heap of gold, who, when he might take as much as he could, lamented that he was able to carry no more; so thou wilt find as much of God and glory, as thy narrow heart is able to contain, and

almost nothing to hinder thy full possession, but the incapacity of thy own spirit. Then thou wilt think, "O that this understanding, and these affections, could contain more! It is more my unfitness than any thing else, that even this place is not my heaven. God is in this place, and I know it not. This mount is full of chariots of fire, but mine eyes are shut, and I cannot see them O the words of love Christ hath to speak, and wonders of love he hath to show, but I cannot bear them yet! Heaven is ready for me, but my heart is unready for heaven." Therefore, reader, seeing thy enjoyment of God in this contemplation much depends on the capacity and disposition of thy heart, seek him here, if ever, with all thy soul. Thrust not Christ into the stable, and the manger, as if thou hadst better guests for the chief rooms. Say to all thy worldly business and thoughts, as Christ to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. Or as Abraham to his servants, when he went to offer Isaac, Abide ye here, and I will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. Even as the priests thrust king Uzziah out of the temple, where he presumed to burn incense, when they saw the leprosy upon him; so do thou thrust those thoughts from the temple of thy heart, which have the badge of God's prohibition upon them.

21. Be sure to set upon this work with the greatest solemnity of heart and mind. There is no trifling in holy things. God will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, Lev. x, 3. These spiritual, excellent, soul raising duties, are, if well used, most profitable; but when used unfaithfully, most dangerous. Labour therefore to have the deepest apprehensions of the presence of God, and his incomprehensible greatness. If queen Esther must not draw near, till the king hold out the sceptre; think, then, with what reverence thou shouldst approach him, who made the worlds with a word of his mouth, who upholds the earth as in the palm of his hand, who keeps the sun, moon, and stars, in their courses, and who sets bounds to the raging sea. Thou art going to converse with him, before whom the earth will quake, and devils do tremble, and at whose bar thou and all the world must shortly stand, and be finally judged. O think

"I shall then have lively apprehensions of his majesty. My drowsy spirits will then be awakened, and my irreverence be laid aside; and why should I not now be roused with the sense of his greatness, and the dread of his name possess my soul?" Labour also to apprehend the greatness of the work which thou attemptest, and to be deeply sensible both of its importance and excellency. If thou wast pleading for thy life at the bar of an earthly udge, thou wouldst be serious; and yet that would be a trifle to this. If thou wast engaged in such a work as David against Goliah, on which the welfare of a kingdom depended; in itself considered, it were nothing to this. Suppose thou wast going to such a wrestling as Jacob's, or to see the sight which the three disciples saw in the mount; how seriously, how reverently, wouldst thou both approach and behold! If but an angel from heaven should appoint to meet thee, at the same time and place of thy contemplations; with what dread wouldst thou be filled? Consider then, with what a spirit thou shouldst meet the Lord, and with what seriousness and awe thou shouldst daily converse with him. Consider also the blessed issue of the work, if it succeed; it will be thy admission into the presence of God, and the beginning of thy eternal glory on earth; a means to make thee live above the rate of other men, and fix thee in the next room to the angels themselves, that thou mayst both live and die joyfully. The prize being so great, thy preparations should be answerable. There is none on earth live such a life of joy and blessedness, as those that are acquainted with this heavenly conversation. The joys of all other men are but like a child's play, a fool's laughter, or a sick man's dream of health. He that trades for heaven is the only gainer, and he that neglects it is the only loser How seriously, therefore, should this work be done

CHAPTER XIV.

What use heavenly contemplation makes of consideration, affections, soliloquy, and prayer.

1. The reader is invited to engage in heavenly contemplation; 2. And to that end is directed in the use of consideration, 3–8. The great influence of which over the heart is represented in several instances· 9. Then it is shown how heavenly contemplation is promoted by th affections; particularly, 10–12. By Love, 13. Desire, 14. Hope, 15 Courage, or boldness, 16–18, and Joy. 19. A caution is added con cerning this exercise of the affections. 20–22. The chapter conclude with some account of the usefulness of soliloquy, and prayer, in hea venly contemplation.

1. Having set thy heart in tune, we now come to the music itself. Having got an appetite, now approach to the feast, and delight thy soul, as with marrow and fatness. Come, for all things are now ready. Heaven and Christ, and the exceeding weight of glory, are before you. Do not make light of this invitation, nor begin to make excuses; whatever thou art, rich or poor, though in alms houses or hospitals, though in highways and hedges, my commission is, if possible, to compel you to come in; and blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God! The manna lieth about your tents, walk out, gather it up, take it home, and feed upon it. In order to this, I am only to direct you how to use your consideration, and affections, your soliloquy, and prayer.

2. Consideration is the great instrument by which this heavenly work is carried on. This must be voluntary, and not forced. Some men consider unwillingly; so God will make the wicked consider their sins, when he shall set them in order before their eyes, Psalm l, 21, 22; so shall the damned consider of the excellency of Christ, whom they once despised, and of the eternal joys which they have foolishly lost. Great is the power which consideration hath for moving the affections, and impressing things on the heart; as will appear by the following particulars.

3. Consideration, as it were, opens the door between the head and the heart. The understanding having received truths, lays them up in the memory, and consideration conveys them from thence to the affections.

What excellency would there be in much learning and knowledge, if the obstructions between the head and the heart were but opened, and the affections did but correspond to the understanding? He is usually the best scholar whose apprehension is quick, clear, and tenacious; but he is usually the best Christian whose apprehension is the deepest, and most affectionate, and who has the readiest passages, not so much from the ear to the brain, as from that to the heart. And though the spirit be the principal cause; yet, on our part, this passage must be opened by consideration.

4. Consideration presents to the affections those things which are most important. The most delightful object does not entertain where it is not seen, nor the most joyful news affect him that does not hear it; but consideration presents to our view those things which were as absent, and brings them to the eye and ear of the soul. Are not Christ and glory affecting objects? Would they not work wonders upon the soul, if they were but clearly discovered, and our apprehensions of them were in some measure answerable to their worth? It is consideration that presents them to us: this is the Christian's perspective, by which he can see from earth to heaven.

5. Consideration also presents the most important things in the most affecting way. Consideration reasons the case with a man's own heart. When a believer would reason his heart to heavenly contemplation, how many arguments offer themselves from God and Christ, from each of the divine perfections, from our former and present state, from promises, from present sufferings and enjoyments, from hell and heaven? Every thing offers itself to promote our joy, and consideration is the hand to draw them all out: it adds one reason to another, till the scales turn: this it does when persuading to joy, till it hath silenced all your distrust and sorrows, and your cause for rejoicing lies plain before you. If another's reasoning is powerful with us, though we are not certain whether he intends to inform or deceive us; how much more should our own reasoning prevail with us, when we are so well acquainted with our own intentions? Nay, how much more should God's reasoning work up

us, which we are sure cannot deceive, or be deceived? Now consideration is but the reading over and repeating God's reasons to our hearts. As the prodigal had many and strong reasons to plead with himself why he should return to his father's house; so have we to plead with our affections, to persuade them to our Father's everlasting mansions.

6. Consideration exalts reason to its just authority It helps to deliver it from its captivity to the senses, and sets it again on the throne of the soul. When reason is silent, it is usually subject; for when it is asleep, the senses domineer. But consideration awakens our reason, till, like Samson, it rouses up itself, and breaks the bonds of sensuality, and bears down the delusions of the flesh. What strength can the lion exert while asleep? What is a king when deposed from his throne more than another man? Spiritual reason excited by meditation, and not fancy or fleshly sense, must judge of heavenly joys. Consideration exalts the objects of faith, and comparatively disgraces the objects of sense. The most inconsiderate men are the most sensual. It is too easy and common to sin against knowledge; but against sober, strong, persevering consideration, men seldom offend.

7. Consideration makes reason strong and active. Before, it was a standing water, but now as a stream which violently bears down all before it. Before, it was as the stones in the brook, but now like that out of David's sling, which smites the Goliah of our unbelief in the forehead. As wicked men continue wicked, because they bring not reason into act and exercise; so godly men are uncomfortable, because they let their reason and faith lie asleep, and do not stir them up to action by this work of meditation. What fears, sorrows, and joys, will our very dreams excite? How much more then would serious meditation affect us?

8. Consideration can continue and persevere in this rational employment. Meditation holds reason and faith to their work, and blows the fire till it thoroughly burns. To run a few steps will not get a man heat, but walking an hour may; and though a sudden occasional thought of heaven will not raise our affections to any spiritual

heat, yet meditation can continue our thoughts till our hearts grow warm. Thus you see the powerful tendency of consideration to produce this great elevation of the soul in heavenly contemplation.

9. Let us next see how this heavenly work is promoted by the particular exercise of the affections. It is by consideration that we first have recourse to the memory, and from thence take those heavenly doctrines which we intend to make the subject of our meditation; such as, promises of eternal life, descriptions of the saint's glory, the resurrection, &c, &c, &c. We then present them to our judgment, that it may deliberately view them over, and take an exact survey, and determine uprightly concerning the perfection of our celestial happiness, against all the dictates of flesh and sense, and so as to magnify the Lord in our hearts, till we are filled with a holy admiration. But the principal thing is to exercise, not merely our judgment, but our faith in the truth of our everlasting rest; by which I mean, both the truth of the promises, and of our own personal interest in them, and title to them. If we did really and firmly believe that there is such a glory, and that within a few days our eyes shall behold it; O what passions would it raise within us! What astonishing apprehensions of that life would it produce! What love, what longings, would it excite within us! O how it would actuate every affection! How it would transport us with joy, upon the least assurance of our title! Never expect to have love and joy move, when faith stands still, which must lead the way. Therefore daily exercise faith, and set before it the freeness of the promise, God's urging all to accept it, Christ's gracious disposition, all the evidences of the love of Christ, his faithfulness to his engagements, and the evidences of his love in ourselves; lay all these together, and think, whether they do not testify the good will of the Lord concerning our salvation, and may not properly be pleaded against our unbelief. Thus, when the judgment hath determined, and faith hath apprehended, the truth of our happiness, then may our meditation proceed to raise our affections, and particularly, love, desire, hope, courage or boldness, and joy.

10. Love is the first affection to be excited in heavenly contemplation. The object of it is goodness. Here, Christian, is the soul reviving part of thy work. Go to thy memory, thy judgment, and thy faith, and from them produce the excellencies of thy rest; present these to thy affection of love, and thou wilt find thyself, as it were, in another world. Speak out, and love can hear. Do but reveal these things, and love can see. It is the brutish love of the world that is blind; divine love is exceedingly quick sighted. Let thy faith take hold of thy heart, and show it the sumptuous buildings of thy eternal habitation, and the glorious ornaments of thy Father's house, even the mansions Christ is preparing, and the honours of his kingdom; let thy faith lead thy heart into the presence of God, and as near as thou possibly canst, and say to it, "Behold the Ancient of Days, the Lord Jehovah, whose name is, I AM: this is he who made all the worlds with his word, who upholds the earth, who rules the nations, who disposes of all events, who subdues his foes, who controls the swelling waves of the sea, who governs the winds, causes the sun to run its race, and the stars to know their courses: this is he, who loved thee from everlasting, formed thee in the womb, gave thee this soul, brought thee forth, showed thee the light, and ranked thee with the chief of his earthly creatures, who endued thee with thy understanding, and beautified thee with his gifts, who maintains thy life and all its comforts, and distinguishes thee from the most miserable and vilest of men. O here is an object worthy of thy love! Here shouldst thou even pour out thy soul in love! Here it is impossible for thee to love too much! This is the Lord who hath blessed thee with his benefits, spread thy table in the sight of thine enemies, and made thy cup overflow! this is he whom angels and saints praise, and the heavenly hosts for ever magnify!" Thus do you expatiate in the praises of God, and open his excellencies to thine heart, till the holy fire of love begins to kindle in thy breast.

11. If thou feelest thy love not yet burn, lead thy heart farther, and show it the Son of the living God, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the

everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; show it the King of saints on the throne of his glory, the first and the last; who is, and was, and is to come; who liveth, and was dead, and behold he liveth for evermore; who hath made thy peace by the blood of his cross, and hath prepared thee with himself a habitation of peace; his office is the great peace maker; his kingdom is the kingdom of peace; his gospel is the tidings of peace; his voice to thee now is the voice of peace: draw near and behold him. Dost thou not hear his voice? He that bids Thomas to come near, and see the print of the nails, and put his finger into his wounds; he it is that calls to thee, "Come near and view the Lord thy Saviour, and be not faithless but believing: peace be unto thee, fear not, it is I." Look well upon him. Dost thou not know him? It is he that brought thee up from the pit of hell, reversed the sentence of thy damnation, bore the curse which thou shouldst have borne, restored thee to the blessing thou hadst forfeited, and purchased the advancement thou must inherit for ever. And dost thou not yet know him? His hands were pierced, his head, his side, his heart, were pierced, that by these marks thou mightst always know him. Dost thou not remember when he found thee lying in thy blood, and took pity on thee, and dressed thy wounds, and brought thee home, and said unto thee, Live? Hast thou forgotten since he wounded himself to cure thy wounds, and let out his own blood to stop thy bleeding? If thou knowest him not by the face, the voice, the hands, thou mayst know him by the heart; that soul pitying heart is his; it can be none but his: love and compassion are its certain signatures: this is he who chose thy life before his own; who pleads his blood before his Father, and makes continual intercession for thee. If he had not suffered; what hadst thou suffered? There was but a step between thee and hell, when he stept in and bore the stroke. And s not here fuel enough for love to feed on? Doth not thy throbbing heart stop here to ease itself, and like Joseph, seek for a place to weep in? Or do not the tears of thy love bedew these lines? Go on then, for the field of love

is large; it will be thy eternal work to behold and love; nor needest thou want work for thy present meditation.

12. How often hath thy Lord found thee, like Hagar, sitting, and weeping, and giving up thy soul for lost, and he opened to thee a well of consolation, and also opened thine eyes to see it? How often, in the posture of Elijah, desiring to die out of thy misery, and he has spread thee a table of unexpected relief, and sent thee on his work refreshed and encouraged? How often, in the case of the prophet's servant crying out, Alas, what shall we do, for a host doth encompass us? and he hath opened thine eyes to see more for thee, than against thee? How often, like Jonah, peevish, and weary of thy life, and he hath mildly said, Dost thou well to be angry with me, or murmur against me? How often hath he set thee on watching and praying, repenting and believing, and when he hath returned, hath found thee asleep, and yet hath covered thy neglect with a mantle of love, and gently pleaded for thee, that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak: Can thy heart be cold when thou thinkest of this? Can it contain, when thou rememberest those boundless compassions? Thus, reader, hold forth the goodness of Christ to thy heart: plead thus with thy frozen soul, till, with David thou canst say, my heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned. If this will not rouse up thy love, thou hast all Christ's personal excellencies to add, all his particular mercies to thyself, all his sweet and near relations to thee, and the happiness of thy everlasting abode with him. Only follow them close to thy heart. Deal with it, as Christ did with Peter, when he thrice asked him, Lovest thou me? till he was grieved, and answers, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee! so grieve and shame thy heart out of its stupidity, till thou canst truly say, "I know, and my Lord knows, that I love him."

13. The next affection to be excited in heavenly contemplation, is desire. The object of it is goodness considered as absent, or not yet attained. If love be hot desire will not be cold. Think with thyself, "What have I seen? O the incomprehensible glory! O the

transcendent beauty! O blessed souls that now enjoy it! who see a thousand times more clearly, what I have seen at a distance, and through dark interposing clouds. What a difference between my state and theirs! I am sighing, and they are singing. I am offending, and they are pleasing God. I am a spectacle of pity, like a Job, or a Lazarus; but they are perfect, and without blemish. I am here entangled in the love of the world, while they are swallowed up in the love of God. They have none of my cares and fears; they weep not in secret; they languish not in sorrows; these tears are wiped away from their eyes. O happy, a thousand times happy, souls! Alas that I must dwell in sinful flesh, when my brethren and companions dwell with God! How far out of sight and reach of their high enjoyments do I here live! what poor feeble thoughts have I of God! What cold affections towards him! How little have I of that life, that love, that joy, in which they continually live. How soon doth that little depart, and leave me in thicker darkness: now and then a spark falls upon my cold heart, and while I gaze upon it, it dies, or rather my heart quenches it. But they have their light in his light, and drink continually at the spring of joys. Here we are vexing each other with quarrels, when they are of one heart and voice, and daily sound forth the hallelujahs of heaven with perfect harmony. O what a feast hath my faith beheld, and what a famine is yet in my spirit! O blessed souls, I may not, I dare not, envy your happiness; I rather rejoice in my brethren's prosperity, and am glad to think of the day when I shall be admitted into your fellowship. I wish not to displace you, but to be so happy as to be with you. Why must I stay, and weep, and wait? My Lord is gone; he hath left this earth, and is entered into his glory; my brethren are gone; my friends are there; my house, my hope, my all s there. When I am so far distant from my God, wonler not what aileth me, if I now complain; an ignorant Micah will do so for his idol, and shall not my soul do so for the living God? Had I no hope of enjoyment, I would go hide myself in the deserts, and lie and howl in some obscure wilderness, and spend my days in fruitless

wishes; but since it is the land of my promised rest, and the state I must myself be advanced to, and my soul draws near, and is almost at it, I will love and long, I will look and desire, I will be breathing, How long, Lord, how long wilt thou suffer this soul to pant and groan, and not open to him who waits, and longs to be with thee?" Thus, Christian reader, let thy thoughts aspire till thy soul longs, as David, O that one would give me to drink of the wells of salvation! And till thou cans say as he did, I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord Psalm cxix, 174. And as the mother and brethren of Christ, when they could not come at him because of the multitude, sent to him, saying, Thy mother and brethren stand without, desiring to see thee; so let thy message to him be, and he will own thee; for he hath said, They that hear my word, and do it, are my mother, and my brethren, Luke viii, 20, 21.

14. Another affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation is hope. This helps to support the soul under sufferings, animates it to the greatest difficulties, gives it firmness in the most shaking trials, enlivens it in duties, and is the very spring that sets all the wheels a going. Who would believe or strive for heaven, if it were not for the hope that he hath to obtain it? Who would pray, but for the hope to prevail with God? If your hope dies, your duties die, your endeavours die, your joys die, and your souls die. And if your hope be not in exercise, but asleep, it is next to dead. Therefore, Christian reader, when thou art winding up thy affections to heaven, forget not to give one lift to thy hope. Think thus, and reason thus with thy own heart; "Why should I not confidently and comfortably hope, when my soul is in the hands of so compassionate a Saviour? And when the kingdom is at the disposal of so bountiful a God? Did he ever discover the least backwardness to my good, or inclination to my ruin? hath he not sworn, that he delights not in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should repent and live? Have not all his dealings witnessed the same? Did he not mind me of my danger, when I never feared it, because he would have me escape it? Did he not mind me of my happiness

when I had no thoughts of it, because he would have me enjoy it? How often hath he drawn me to himself, and his Christ, when I have drawn backward? How hath his Spirit incessantly solicited my heart? And would he have done all this, if he had been willing that I should perish? Should I not hope, if an honest man had promised me something in his power? And shall I not hope, when I have the covenant and oath of God? It is true, the glory is out of sight; we have not beheld the mansions of the saints; but is not the promise of God more certain than our sight? We must not be saved by sight, but by hope, and hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it, Rom. viii, 24, 25. I have been ashamed of my hope in an arm of flesh, but hope in the promise of God maketh not ashamed, Rom. v, 5. In my greatest sufferings I will say, The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him; the Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. For the Lord will not cast off for ever. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies, Lam. iii, 24–26, 31, 32. Though I languish and die, yet will I hope; for the righteous hath hope in his death, Prov. xiv, 32. Though I must lie down in the dust and darkness, yet there my flesh shall rest in hope, Psalm xvi, 9. And when my flesh hath nothing to rejoice in, yet will I hold fast the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end, Heb. iii, 6; for the hope of the righteous shall be gladness, Prov. x, 28. Indeed, if I was myself to satisfy divine justice, then there had been no hope; but Christ hath brought in a better hope, by the which we draw nigh unto God, Heb. vii, 19. Or, if I had to do with a feeble creature, there were small hope; for how could he raise this body from the dust, and lift me above the sun? But what is this to the almighty power, which made the heavens and earth out of nothing? Cannot that power which raised Christ from the dead, raise me? and that, which hath glorified the head, glorify also the members? Doubtless, by the

blood of his covenant, God will send forth his prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water; therefore will I turn to the strong hold, as a prisoner of hope," Zech. ix, 11, 12.

15. Courage or boldness is another affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation. It leadeth to resolution, and concludeth in action. When you have raised your love, desire, and hope, go on, and think thus with yourself; "Will God indeed dwell with men? And is here such a glory within the reach of hope? Why then do I not lay hold upon it? Where is the cheerful vigour of my spirit? Why do I not gird up the loins of my mind? 1 Pet. i, 13. Why do I not set upon my enemies on every side, and valiantly break through all resistance? What should stop me or intimidate me? Is God with me, or against me in the work? Will Christ stand by me, or will he not? If God and Christ be for me, who can be against me? Rom. viii, 31. In the work of sin, almost all things are ready to help us, and only God and his servants are against us, yet how ill doth that work prosper in our hands? But in my course to heaven, almost all things are against me, but God is for me; and therefore how happily doth the work succeed? Do I set upon this work in my own strength, or rather in the strength of Christ my Lord? And cannot I do all things through him that strengthens me? Phil. iv, 13. Was he ever foiled by an enemy? He hath indeed been assaulted, but was he ever conquered? Why then doth my flesh urge me with the difficulties of the work? Is any thing too hard for Omnipotence? May not Peter boldly walk on the sea, if Christ gives the word of command? If we begin to sink, is it from the weakness of Christ, or the smallness of our faith? Do I not well deserve to be turned into hell, if mortal threats can drive me thither? Do I not well deserve to be shut out of heaven, if I will be frightened from thence with the reproach of tongues? What if it were father, or mother, or husband, or wife or the nearest friend I have in the world, (if they may be called friends that would draw me to damnation,) should I not forsake all that would keep me from Christ? Will their friendship countervail the enmity of God, or be any comfort to my condemned soul? Shall I be yielding to

the desires of men, and only harden myself against the Lord? Let them beseech me upon their knees, I will scorn to stop my course to behold them; I will shut my ears to their cries: let them flatter, or frown; let them draw out tongues and swords against me; I am resolved in the strength of Christ to break through and look upon them as dust: if they would entice me with preferment, even with the kingdoms of the world, I will no more regard them than the dung of the earth. O blessed rest! O glorious state! Who would sell thee for dreams and shadows? Who would be enticed or affrighted from thee? Who would not strive, and fight, and watch, and run, and that with violence, even to the last breath, in order to obtain thee? Surely none but those that know thee not, and believe not thy glory."

16. The last affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation is joy. Love, desire, hope, and courage, all tend to raise our joy. This is so desirable to every man by nature, and so essentially necessary to constitute our happiness, that, I hope, I need not say much to persuade you to any thing that would make your life delightful. Supposing you therefore already convinced, that the pleasures of the flesh are brutish and perishing, and that your solid and lasting joy must be from heaven, instead of persuading, I shall proceed in directing. Reader, if thou hast managed well the former work, thou art got within sight of thy rest; thou believest the truth of it; thou art convinced of its excellency; thou art fallen in love with it; thou longest after it; thou hopest for it; and thou art resolved to venture courageously for obtaining it. But is here any work for joy in this? We delight in the good we possess; it is present good that is the object of joy; and thou wilt say, "Alas! I am yet without it." But think a little farther with thyself. Is it nothing to have a deed of gift from God? Are his infallible promises no ground of joy? Is it nothing to live in daily expectation of entering into the kingdom? Is not my assurance of being hereafter glorified, a sufficient ground for inexpressible joy? Is it not a delight to the heir of a kingdom, to think of what he must soon possess, though at present he little differ from a servant?

Have we not both command, and example, for rejoicing in hope of the glory of God? Rom. v, 2, xii, 12.

17. Here then, reader, take thy heart once more, and carry it to the top of the highest mount; show it the kingdom of Christ, and the glory of it, and say to it, "All this will thy Lord give thee who hast believed in him, and been a worshipper of him. It is the Father's good pleasure to give thee this kingdom, Luke xii, 32. Seest thou this astonishing glory which is above thee? All this is thy own inheritance. This crown is thine, these pleasures are thine, this company, this beautiful place, all are thine; because thou art Christ's, and Christ is thine; when thou wast united to him, thou hadst all these with him." Thus take thy heart into the land of promise; show it the pleasant hills and fruitful valleys; show it the clusters of grapes which thou hast gathered to convince it that it is a blessed land, flowing with better than milk and honey: enter the gates of the holy city, walk through the streets of the New Jerusalem! walk about Sion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof; mark well her bulwarks; consider her palaces; that thou mayst tell it to thy soul, Psalm xlviii, 12, 13. Hath it not the glory of God, and is not her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as a crystal? See the twelve foundations of her walls, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And the building of the walls of it are of jasper; and the city is pure gold, like unto clear glass; and the foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, every several gate is of one pearl; and the street of the city is pure gold, as it were transparent glass. There is no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. It hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; and the nations of them who are saved shall walk in the light of it. These sayings are faithful and true: And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angels, and his own Son, to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done, Rev. xxi, 11–24, xxii, 6. Say now to all this, "This is

thy rest, O my soul! And this must be the place of thy everlasting habitation. Let all the sons of Sion rejoice, let the daughters of Jerusalem be glad; for great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Sion. God is known in her palaces for a refuge, Psalm xlviii, 11, 1–3.

18. Yet proceed on. The soul that loves ascends frequently, and runs familiarly through the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, visiting the patriarchs and prophets, saluting the apostles, and admiring the armies of martyrs: so do thou lead on thy heart as from street to street; bring it into the palace of the Great King; lead it, as it were, from chamber to chamber. Say to it, "Here must I lodge; here must I live; here must I praise; here must I love and be beloved. I must shortly be one of this heavenly choir, and be better skilled in the music. Among this blessed company must I take up my place, my voice must join to make up the melody. My tears will then be wiped away; my groans be turned to another tune; my cottage of clay be changed to this palace: my prison rags to these splendid robes; and my sordid flesh shall be put off, and such a sunlike spiritual body be put on: for the former things are here passed away, Rev. xxi, 4. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God! Psalm lxxxvii, 3. When I look upon this glorious place, what a dunghill and dungeon methinks is earth! O what difference betwixt a man feeble, pained, groaning, dying, rotting in the grave, and one of these triumphant, shining saints! Here shall I drink of the river of pleasures, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, Psalm xxxvi, 8, xlvi, 4. Must Israel, under the bondage of the law, serve the Lord with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things? Deut. xxviii, 47. Surely I shall serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart, for the abundance of glory. Did persecuted saints take joyfully the spoiling of their goods? Heb. x, 34. And shall not I take joyfully such a full reparation of all my losses? Was it a celebrated day wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, because it was turned unto them from sorrow to

joy, and from mourning unto a good day? Esther ix, 22. What a day then will that be to my soul, whose rest and change will be inconceivably greater? When the wise men saw the star that led to Christ, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy, Matt. ii, 10. But I shall shortly see him, who is himself the bright and morning star, Rev. xxii, 16. If the disciples departed from the sepulchre with great joy, when they had but heard that their Lord was risen from the dead, Matt. xxviii, 7, 8; what will be my joy, when I shall see him reigning in glory, and myself raised to a blessed communion with him? Then shall I indeed have beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; and Sion shall be made an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations, Isaiah lxi, 3, lx, 15. Why then do I not arise from the dust, and cease my complaints? Why do I not trample on vain delights, and feed on the foreseen delights of glory? Why is not my life a continual joy, and the savour of heaven perpetually upon my spirit?"

19. Let me here observe that here is no necessity to exercise these affections, either exactly in this order, or all at one time. Sometimes one of thy affections may need more exciting, or may be more lively than the rest; or if thy time be short, one may be exercised one day, and another upon the next; all which must be left to thy prudence to determine. Thou hast also an opportunity, if inclined to make use of it, to exercise opposite and more mixed affections; such as, hatred of sin, which would deprive thy soul of these immortal joys; godly fear, lest thou shouldst abuse thy mercy; godly shame and grief, for having abused it; unfeigned repentance; self indignation; jealousy over thy heart; and pity for those who are in danger of losing these immortal joys.

20. We are also to take notice how heavenly contemplation is promoted by soliloquy and prayer. Though consideration be the chief instrument in this work, yet, by itself, it is not so likely to affect this heart. In this respect contemplation is like preaching, where the mere explaining of truths and duties is seldom attended with such success, as the lively application of them to the

conscience; and especially when a divine blessing is earnestly sought for to accompany such application.

21. By soliloquy, or a pleading the case with thyself, thou must in thy meditation quicken thy own heart. Enter into a serious debate with it. Plead with it in the most moving and affecting language, and urge it with the most powerful and weighty arguments. It is what holy men of God have practised in all ages. Thus David, Why art thou cast down, O my soul! And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God, Psalm xlii, 11. And again, Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits, &c, Psalm ciii, 1–5. This soliloquy is to be made use of according to the several affections of the soul, and according to its several necessities. It is a preaching to one's self: for as every good master or father of a family is a good preacher to his own family; so every good Christian is a good preacher to his own soul. Therefore the very same method which a minister should use, in his preaching to others, every Christian should endeavour after in speaking to himself. Observe the matter and manner of the most heart affecting minister; let him be as a pattern for your imitation; and the same way that he takes with the hearts of his people, do thou also take with thine own heart. Do this in thy heavenly contemplation; explain to thyself the things on which thou dost meditate; confirm thy faith in them from Scripture; and then apply them to thyself, according to their nature, and thy own necessity. There is no need to object against this from a sense of thy own inability. Doth not God command thee to teach the Scriptures diligently unto thy children, and talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou rises up? Deut. vi, 7. And if thou must have some ability to teach thy children, much more to teach thyself; and if thou canst talk of divine things to others, why not also to thine own heart?

22. Heavenly contemplation is also promoted by speak-

ng to God in prayer; as well as by speaking to ourselves in soliloquy. Ejaculatory prayer may very properly be intermixed with meditation, as a part of the duty. How often do we find David, in the same psalm, sometimes pleading with his soul, and sometimes with God? The apostle bids us speak to ourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, Eph. v, 19; and no doubt we may also speak to God in them. This keeps the soul sensible of the divine presence, and tends greatly to quicken and raise it. As God is the highest object of our thoughts, so our viewing of him, speaking to him, and pleading with him, more elevates the soul, and excites the affections, than any other part of meditation. Though we remain unaffected, while we plead the case with ourselves; yet, when we turn our speech to God, it may strike us with awe; and the holiness and majesty of him whom we speak to, may cause both the matter and words to pierce the deeper. When we read, that Isaac went out to meditate in the field, the margin says, to pray; for the Hebrew word signifies both. Thus in our meditations, to intermix soliloquy and prayer; sometimes speaking to our own hearts, and sometimes to God, is, I apprehend, the highest step we can advance in this heavenly work. Nor should we imagine it will be as well to take up with prayer alone, and lay aside meditation. For they are distinct duties, and must both of them be performed. We need one as well as the other, and therefore shall wrong ourselves by neglecting either. Besides the mixture of them, like music, will be more engaging; as the one serves to put life into the other. And our speaking to ourselves in meditation should go before our speaking to God in prayers. For want of attending to this due order, men speak to God with far less reverence and affection than they would speak to an angel, if he should appear to them; or to a judge, if they were speaking for their lives. Speaking to the God of heaven in prayer is a weightier duty than most are aware of.

CHAPTER XV.

Heavenly contemplation assisted by sensible objects, and guarded against a treacherous heart.

1. As it is difficult to maintain a lively impression of heavenly things, therefore, 2. Heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects; 3. If we draw strong suppositions from sense; and 4–11. If we compare the objects of sense with the objects of faith, several instances of which are produced. 12. Heavenly contemplation may also be guarded against a treacherous heart, by considering, 13, 14. The great backwardness of the heart to this duty, 15. Its trifling in it, 16. Its wandering from it, and 17. Its too abruptly putting an end to it.

1. The most difficult part of heavenly contemplation is to maintain a lively sense of heavenly things upon our hearts. It is easier merely to think of heaven a whole day, than to be lively and affectionate in those thoughts a quarter of an hour. Faith is imperfect, for we are renewed but in part; and goes against a world of resistance; and, being supernatural, is prone to decline and languish, unless it be continually excited. Sense is strong according to the strength of the flesh; and being natural, continues while nature continues. The objects of faith are far off; but those of sense are nigh. We must go as far as heaven for our joys. To rejoice in what we never saw, nor ever knew the man that did see, and this upon a mere promise in the Bible; is not so easy as to rejoice in what we see and possess. It must therefore be a point of spiritual prudence to call in sense to the assistance of faith. It will be a good work if we can make friends of these usual enemies, and make them instruments for raising us to God, which are so often the means of drawing us from him. Why hath God given us either our senses, or their common objects, if they might not be serviceable to his praise? Why doth the Holy Spirit describe the glory of the New Jerusalem, in expressions that are ever grateful to the flesh? Is it that we might think heaven to be made of gold and pearl? or that the saints and angels eat and drink? No, but to help us to conceive them as we are able, and to use these borrowed phrases as a glass, in which we must see the things themselves imperfectly represented, till we come to an

immediate and perfect sight. And besides showing how heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects, this chapter will also show how it may be preserved from a wandering heart.

2. In order that heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects, let me only advise to draw strong uppositions from sense, and to compare the objects of ense with objects of faith.

3. For the helping of thy affections in heavenly contemplation, draw as strong suppositions as possible from thy senses. Think on the joys above, as boldly as Scripture hath expressed them. Bring down thy conceptions to the reach of sense. Both love and joy are promoted by familiar acquaintance. When we attempt to think of God and glory, without the Scripture manner of representing them, we are lost, and have nothing to fix our thoughts upon; we set them so far from us, that our thoughts are strange, and we are ready to say, what is above us is nothing to us. To conceive of God and glory, only as above our conception, will beget but little love; or as above our love, will produce little joy. Therefore put Christ no farther from you than he hath put himself, lest the divine nature be again inaccessible. Think of Christ as in our own glorified nature. Think of glorified saints as men made perfect. Suppose thyself a companion of John in his survey of the New Jerusalem, and viewing the thrones, the Majesty, the heavenly hosts, the shining splendour, which he saw. Suppose thyself his fellow traveller into the celestial kingdom, and that thou hadst seen all the saints in their white robes, with palms in their hands; and that thou hadst heard those songs of Moses, and of the Lamb. If thou hadst really seen and heard these things, in what a rapture wouldst thou have been? And the more seriously thou puttest this supposition to thyself, the more will thy meditation elevate thy heart. Do not, like the papists, draw them in pictures; but get the liveliest picture of them in thy mind that thou possibly canst, by contemplating the Scripture account of them, till thou canst say, "Methinks I see a glimpse of glory! Methinks I hear the shouts of joy and praise, and even stand by Abraham and David,

Peter and Paul, and other triumphant souls! Methinks I even see the Son of God appearing in the clouds, and the world standing at his bar to receive their doom; and hear him say, Come, ye blessed of my Father; and see them enter rejoicing into the joy of their Lord! My very dreams of these things have sometimes greatly affected me, and should not these just suppositions much more affect me? What if I had seen with Paul those unutterable things? Or with Stephen had seen heaven opened, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God? Surely that one sight was worth his storm of stones. What if I had seen, as Micaiah did, the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left? Such things did these men of God see; and I shall shortly see far more than ever they saw, till they were loosed from flesh, as I must be." Thus you see how it excites our affections in the heavenly work, if we make strong and familiar suppositions from our bodily senses, concerning the state of blessedness, as the Spirit hath in condescending language expressed it.

4. The other way in which our senses may promote this heavenly work, is, by comparing the objects of sense with the objects of faith. As for instance: you may strongly argue with your hearts from the corrupt de lights of sensual men, to the joys above. Think with yourselves; "Is it such a delight to a sinner to do wickedly? And will it not be delightful indeed to live with God? Hath the drunkard such delight in his cups, that the fears of damnation will not make him forsake them? Will the whoremaster rather part with his credit, estate, and salvation, than with his brutish delight? If the way to hell can afford such pleasure, what then are the pleasures of the saints in heaven? If the covetous man hath so much pleasure in his wealth, and the ambitious man in his place of power and titles of honour; what then have the saints in everlasting treasures, and in heavenly honours, where we shall set above principalities and powers, and be made the glorious spouse of Christ? How delightfully will the voluptuous follow their recreations from morning to night, or sit at their cards and dice, nights and days together! O the delight we shall

have when we come to our rest, in beholding the face of the living God, and in singing forth the praises to him and the Lamb!" Compare also the delights above, with the lawful and moderate delights of sense. Think with thyself, "How sweet is food to my taste when I am hungry; especially if it be, as Isaac said, such as I love, which my temperance and appetite incline to! What delight then must my soul have in feeding upon Christ, the living bread, and in eating with him at his table in his kingdom? Was a mess of pottage so sweet to Esau in his hunger, that he would buy it at so dear a rate as his birthright? How highly then should I value this never perishing food? How pleasant is drink in the extremity of thirst, scarce to be expressed; enough to make the strength of Samson revive! O how delightful will it be to my soul to drink of that fountain of living water, which whoso drinketh it shall thirst no more? How delightful are grateful odours to the smell; or music to the ear; or beautiful sights to the eye? What fragrance then hath the precious ointment which is poured on the head of our glorified Saviour, and which must be poured on the head of all his saints, and will fill all heaven with its odour? How delightful is the music of the heavenly host? How pleasing will be those real beauties above? How glorious the building not made with hands, the house that God dwells in, the walks and prospects in the city of God, and the celestial paradise!"

5. Compare also the delights above, with those we find in natural knowledge. These are far beyond the delights of sense; but how much farther are the delights of heaven? Think then, "Can an Archimedes be so taken up with his mathematical invention, that the threats of death cannot disengage him, but he will die in the midst of his contemplations? Should I not be much more taken up with the delights of glory, and die with these contemplations fresh upon my soul; especially when my death will perfect my delights, while those of Archimedes die with him? What exquisite pleasure is it to dive into the secrets of nature, and find out the mystery of arts and sciences; especially if we make a new discovery in any one of them? What high delights are there then in the

knowledge of God and Christ? If the face of human learning be so beautiful, as to make sensual pleasure appear base and brutish; how beautiful then is the face of God? When we meet with some choice book, how could we read it day and night, almost forgetful of meat, drink, or sleep? What delights are there then at God's right hand, where we shall know in a moment all that is to be known! Compare also the delights above with the delights of morality, and of the natural affections. What delight had many sober heathens in the rules and practice of moral duties, so that they took him alone for an honest man, who did well through the love of virtue, and not merely for fear of punishment: yea, so much valued was this moral virtue, that they thought man's chief happiness consisted in it? Think then, "What excellency will there be in our heavenly perfection and in that uncreated perfection of God which we shall behold! What sweetness is there in the exercise of natural love, whether to children, parents, yoke fellows, or intimate friends? Does David say of Jonathan, Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women? Did the soul of Jonathan cleave to David? Had Christ himself one disciple whom he especially loved, and who was wont to lean on his breast? If then the delights of close and cordial friendship be so great, what delight shall we have in the friendship of the Most High, and in our natural intimacy with Jesus Christ, and in the dearest love of the saints? Surely this will be a stricter friendship, and these more lovely and desirable friends, than ever the sun beheld; and both our affections to our Father and Saviour, and especially theirs to us, will be such as we never knew here. If one angel could destroy a host, the affections of spirits must also be proportionably stronger, so that we shall then love a thousand times more ardently than we can now. As all the attributes and works of God are incomprehensible, so is this of love: he will love us infinitely beyond our most perfect love to him. What then will there be in this mutual love?"

6. Compare also the excellencies of heaven with those glorious works of creation which our eyes now behold. What wisdom, power, and goodness, are manifested there

in! How does the majesty of the Creator shine in this fabric of the world! His works are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. What divine skill in forming the bodies of men or beasts? What excellency in every plant! What beauty in flowers! What variety and usefulness in herbs, fruits, and minerals! What wonders are contained in the earth and its inhabitants; the ocean of waters, with its motions and dimensions; and the constant succession of spring and autumn summer and winter! Think then, "If these things, which are but servants to sinful man, are so full of mysterious worth, what is that place where God himself dwells, and which is prepared for just men made perfect with Christ? What glory is there in the least of yonder stars? What a vast resplendent body is yonder moon, and every planet? What an inconceivable glory hath the sun? But all this is nothing to the glory of heaven. Yonder sun must there be laid aside as useless. Yonder is but darkness to the lustre of my Father's house. I shall myself be as glorious as that sun. This whole earth is but my Father's footstool. This thunder is nothing to his dreadful voice. These winds are nothing to the breath of his mouth. If sending rain, and making the sun to rise on the just, and on the unjust, be so wonderful; how much more wonderful and glorious will that sun be, which must shine on none but saints and angels?" Compare also the enjoyments above, with the wonders of Providence in the church and world. Would it not be an astonishing sight to see the sea stand as a wall on the right hand and on the left, and the dry land appear in the midst, and the people of Israel pass safely through, and Pharaoh and his host drowned; or to have seen the ten plagues of Egypt; or the rock gushing forth streams; or manna and quails rained from heaven; or the earth opening and swallowing up the wicked? But we shall see far greater things than these; not only sights more wonderful, bu more delightful: there shall be no blood, nor wrath in termingled; nor shall we cry out, as the men of Beth shemith, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God How astonishing, to see the sun stand still in the firmament; or the dial of Ahaz go back ten degrees! But we

shall see when there shall be no sun; or rather shall behold for ever a Sun of infinitely greater brightness. What a life should we live, if we could have drought or rain at our prayers; or have fire from heaven to destroy our enemies, as Elijah had; or raise the dead, as Elisha; or miraculously cure diseases, and speak all languages, as the apostles? Alas, these are nothing to the wonders we shall see and possess with God; and all of them wonders of goodness and love! We shall ourselves be the subjects of more wonderful mercies than any of these. Jonah was raised but from a three days' burial in the belly of a fish; but we shall be raised from many years' rottenness and dust: and that dust exalted to the glory of the sun; and that glory perpetuated through eternity. Surely, if we observe but common providences; as the motions of the sun; the tides of the sea; the standing of the earth; the watering of it with rain, as a garden; the keeping in order a wicked confused world; with many others; they are all admirable. But what are these to the Sion of God, the vision of the divine Majesty, and the order of the heavenly hosts? Add to these those particular providences which thou hast thyself enjoyed and recorded through thy life, and compare them with the mercies thou shalt have above. Look over the mercies of thy youth and riper age, of thy prosperity and adversity, of thy several places and relations; are they not excellent and innumerable, rich and engaging? How sweet was it to thee, when God resolved thy doubts, scattered thy fears, prevented the inconveniences to which thy own counsel would have cast thee, eased thy pains, healed thy sickness, and raised thee up, as from death and the grave? Think then, "Are all these so sweet and precious, that without them my life would have been a perpetual misery? Hath his providence on earth lifted me so high, and his gentleness made me so great? How sweet then will his glorious presence be! How high will his eternal love exalt me; and how shall I be made n communion with his greatness! If my pilgrimage and warfare have such mercies, what shall I find in my home, and in my triumph? If God communicates so much to me while I remain a sinner; what will he be-

stow when I am a perfected saint? If I had so much at a distance from him; what shall I have in his immediate presence, where I shall ever stand before his throne?"

7. Compare the joys above with the comforts thou hast here received in ordinances. Hath not the Bible been to thee as an open fountain, flowing with comforts day and night? What suitable promises have come into thy mind; so that with David, thou mayst say, Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction? Think then, "If his word be so full o. consolations, what overflowing springs shall we find in God himself? If his letters are so comfortable, what will the glories of his presence be? If the promise is so sweet, what will the performance be? If the Testament of our Lord, and our charter for the kingdom be so comfortable, what will be our possession of the kingdom itself? Think farther, "What delights have I also found in the word preached? When I have sat under a heavenly, heart searching teacher, how hath my heart been warmed! Methinks I have felt myself almost in heaven. How often have I gone to the congregation troubled in spirit, and returned joyful! How often have I gone doubting, and God hath sent me home persuaded of his love in Christ! What cordials have I met with to animate me in every conflict! If but the face of Moses shine so gloriously, what glory is there in the face of God? If the feet of them that publish peace, that bring good tidings of salvation, be beautiful; how beautiful is the face of the Prince of peace? If this treasure be so precious in earthen vessels; what is that treasure laid up in heaven? Blessed are the eyes that see what is seen there, and the ears that hear the things that are heard there. There shall I hear Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John, Peter, Paul: not preaching to gainsayers, in imprisonment, persecution, and reproach; but triumphing in the praises of him that hath raised them to honour and glory." Think also "What joy is it to have access and acceptance in prayer that I may always go to God, and open my case, and unbosom my soul to him, as to my most faithful friend But it will be a more unspeakable joy, when I shall receive all blessings without asking, and all my necessities

and miseries will be removed, and when God himself will be the portion and inheritance of my soul." As for the Lord's supper, "What a privilege is it to be admitted to sit at his table, to have his covenant sealed to me there! But all the life and comfort there is to assure me of the comforts hereafter. O the difference between the last supper of Christ on earth, and the marriage supper of the Lamb at the great day! Then his room will be the glorious heavens; his attendants, all the hosts of angels and saints; no Judas, no unfurnished guest, comes there; but the humble believers must sit down by him, and their feast will be their mutual loving and rejoicing." Concerning the communion of saints, think with thyself, "What a pleasure is it to live with intelligent and heavenly Christians! David says of such, they were all his delight. O what a delightful society then shall I have above! Had I but seen Job on the dung hill, what a mirror of patience! and what will it be to see him in glory? How delightful to have heard Paul and Silas singing in the stocks! How much more to hear them sing praises in heaven! What melody did David make on his harp? But how much more melodious to hear that sweet singer in the heavenly choir! What would I have given for an hour's free converse with Paul, when he was just come down from the third heaven? But I must shortly see those things myself, and possess what I see." Once more, think of praising God in concert with his saints. "What if I had been in the place of those shepherds, who saw and heard the heavenly host singing, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men? But I shall see and hear more glorious things. How blessed should I have thought myself, had I heard Christ in his thanksgivings to his Father? How much more, when I shall hear him pronounce me blessed? If there was such joy at bringing back the ark, or at rebuilding the temple; what will there be in the New Jerusalem? If the earth rent, when the people rejoiced at Solomon's coronation; what a joyful shout will there be at the appearance of the King of the church? If, when the foundations of the earth were laid, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy; what

a joyful song will there be, when the world of glory is both founded and finished, when the top stone is laid, and when the holy city is adorned as the bride, the Lamb's wife?

8. Compare the joy thou shalt have in heaven, with what the saints have found in the way to it, and in the foretastes of it. When did God ever reveal the least of himself to any of his saints, but the joy of their heart was answerable to the revelation? In what an ecstacy was Peter on the mount of transfiguration? Master, says he, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. As if he said, "O let us not go down again to yonder persecuting rabble; let us not return to our mean and suffering state. Is it not better to stay here now we are here? Is not here better company and sweeter pleasure? How was Paul lifted up with what he saw! How did the face of Moses shine, when he had been talking with God! These were all extraordinary foretastes; but little to the full beatifical vision. How often have we read and heard of dying saints, who have been as full of joy as their hearts could hold; and when their bodies have felt the extremity of sickness and pain, have had so much of heaven in their spirits, that their joy hath far exceeded their sorrows? If a spark of this fire be so glorious, even amidst the sea of adversity; what then is glory itself? O the joy that the martyrs have felt in the flames! They were flesh and blood as well as we; it must therefore be some excellent thing that filled their spirits with joy while their bodies were burning. Think, reader, in thy meditations, "Sure it must be some wonderful foretaste of glory that made the flames of fire easy and the king of terrors welcome. What then is glory itself? What a blessed rest, when the thoughts of it made Paul desire to depart, and be with Christ; and makes the saints never think themselves well, till they are dead. Shall Saunders embrace the stake and cry, Welcome cross? And shall not I more delightfully embrace my blessedness, and cry, Welcome crown? Shall Bradford kiss the faggot? And shall not I kiss the Saviour? Shall another poor martyr rejoice to have her foot in the same

hole of the stocks, in which Mr. Philpot's had been before her? And shall not I rejoice that my soul shall live in the same place of glory, where Christ and his apostles are gone before me? Shall fire and faggot, prisons and banishment, cruel mockings and scourgings, be more welcome to others, than Christ and glory to me? God forbid."

9. Compare the glory of the heavenly kingdom, with the glory of the church on earth, and of Christ in his tate of humiliation. If Christ, suffering in the room of inners, had such excellency, what is Christ at his Father's right hand? If the church under her sins and enemies have so much beauty, what will she have at the marriage of the Lamb? How wonderful was the Son of God in the form of a servant! When he was born, a new star must appear and conduct strangers to worship him in a manger; heavenly hosts with their songs must celebrate his nativity; while a child, he must dispute with doctors; when he enters upon his office, he turns water into wine; feeds thousands with a few loaves and fishes; cleanses the lepers, heals the sick, restores the lame, gives sight to the blind, and raises the dead. How wonderful then is his celestial glory? If there be such cutting down of boughs, and spreading of garments, and crying hosanna, for one that comes into Jerusalem riding on an ass; what will there be when he comes with his angels in his glory? If they that heard him preach the gospel of the kingdom, confess, Never man spake like this man; they then that behold his majesty in his kingdom, will say, There was never glory like this glory. If when his enemies came to apprehend him, they fell to the ground; if when he is dying, the earth quakes, the veil of the temple is rent, the sun eclipsed, the dead bodies of the saints arise, and the standers by acknowledge, Verily this was the Son of God; O what a day will it be, when the dead must all arise, and stand before him; when he will once more shake, not the earth only, but the heavens also; when this sun shall be taken out of the firmament, and be everlastingly darkened with his glory, and when every tongue shall confess him to be Lord and King! If when he rose again, death and the grave lost their power; if angels must roll away the stone, terrify the keepers till

they are as dead men, and send the tidings to his disciples; if he ascend to heaven in their sight; what power, dominion, and glory, is he now possessed of, and which we must for ever possess with him! When he is gone, can a few poor fishermen and tent makers cure the lame, blind, and sick, open prisons, destroy the disobedient, raise the dead, and astonish their adversaries? What a work will that be, where every one can do greater works than these! If the preaching of the gospel be accompanied with such power as to discover the secrets of the heart, humble the proud sinner, and make the most obdurate tremble; if it can make men burn their books, sell their lands, bring in the price and lay it down at the preacher's feet; if it can convert thousands, and turn the world upside down; if its doctrine, from the prisoner at the bar, can make the judge on the bench tremble; if Christ and his saints have this power and honour in the day of their abasement, and in the time appointed for their suffering and disgrace; what then will they have in their absolute dominion, and full advancement in their kingdom of glory?

10. Compare the glorious change thou shalt have at last, with the gracious change which the Spirit hath here wrought on thy heart. There is not the smallest sincere grace in thee, but is of greater worth than the riches of the Indies; not a hearty desire and groan after Christ, but is more to be valued than the kingdoms of the world. A renewed nature is the very image of God; Christ dwelling in us; and the Spirit of God abiding in us; it is a beam from the face of God; the seed of God remaining in us; the only inherent beauty of the rational soul: it ennobles man above all nobility; fits him to understand his Maker's pleasure, do his will, and receive his glory. If this grain of mustard seed be so precious, what is the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God? If a spark of life, which will but strive against corruptions, and flame out a few desires and groans, be of so much worth; how glorious then is the fountain of this life? If we are said to be like God, when we are pressed down with a body of sin; sure we shall be much more like God, when we have no such thing as sin within us. Is the desire after

and love of heaven so excellent; what then is the thing itself? Is our joy in foreseeing and believing so sweet; what will be the joy of full possession? How glad is a Christian when he feels his heart begin to melt, and be dissolved with the thoughts of sinful unkindness? Even this sorrow yields him joy. O what then will it be, when we shall know, and love, and rejoice, and praise, in the highest perfection? Think with thyself, "What a change was it to be taken from that state wherein I was born, and in which I was rivetted by custom, when thousands of sins lay upon my score, and if I had so died, I had been damned for ever! What an astonishing change, to be justified from all these enormous crimes, and freed from all these fearful plagues, and made an heir of heaven! How often, when I have thought of my regeneration, have I cried out, O blessed day! and blessed be the Lord that ever I saw it! How then shall I cry out in heaven, O blessed eternity! and blessed be the Lord that brought me to it! Did the angels of God rejoice to see my conversion? Surely they will congratulate my felicity in my salvation. Grace is but a spark raked up in the ashes, covered with flesh from the sight of the world, and sometimes covered with corruption from my own sight; but my everlasting glory will not be so clouded, nor my light be under a bushel, but upon a hill, even mount Sion, the mount of God."

11. Once more compare the joys which thou shalt have above, with those foretastes of it which the Spirit hath given thee here. Hath not God sometimes revealed himself extraordinarily to thy soul, and let a drop of glory fall upon it? Hast thou not been ready to say, 'O that it might be thus with my soul continually? Didst thou never cry out with the martyr, after thy long and mournful expectations, "He is come, he is come?" Didst thou never, under a lively sermon of heaven, or in thy retired contemplations on that blessed state, perceive thy drooping spirits revive, and thy dejected heart lift up the head, and the light of heaven dawn on thy soul? Think with thyself, "What is this earnest to the full inheritance? Alas, all this light, that so amazeth and rejoiceth me, is but a candle lighted from heaven to lead

me thither through this world of darkness: if some godly men have been overwhelmed with joy till they have cried out, Hold, Lord, stay thy hand; I can bear no more: what then will be my joys in heaven, when my soul shall be so capable of seeing and enjoying God, that though the light be ten thousand times greater than the sun, yet my eyes shall be able for ever to behold it?" Or, if thou hast not yet felt these sweet foretastes, (for every believer hath not felt them,) then make use of such delights as hou hast felt, in order the better to discern what thou shalt hereafter feel.

12. I am now to show how heavenly contemplation may be preserved from a wandering heart. Our chief work is here to discover the danger, and that will direct to the fittest remedy. The heart will prove the greatest hinderance in this heavenly employment; either by backwardness to it; or, by trifling in it; or, by frequent excursions to other objects; or, by abruptly ending the work before it is well begun. As you value the comfort of this work, these dangerous evils must be faithfully resisted.

13. Thou wilt find thy heart as backward to this, I think, as to any work in the world. O what excuses will it make! What evasions will it find out! What delays and demurs, when it is ever so much convinced! either it will question whether it be a duty or not, or, if it be so to others, whether to thyself. It will tell thee, "This is a work for ministers that have nothing else to study; or for persons that have more leisure than thou hast." If thou be a minister, it will tell thee, "This is the duty of the people; it is enough for thee to meditate for their instruction, and let them meditate on what they have heard. As if it was thy duty only to cook their meat, and serve it up, and they alone must eat it, digest it, and live upon it. If all this will not do, thy heart will tell thee of other business, or set thee upon some other duty for it had rather go to any duty than this. Perhaps it will tell thee, "Other duties are greater, and therefore this must give place to them, because thou hast no time for both. Public business is more important; to study and preach for the saving of souls, must be preferred

before these private contemplations." As if thou hadst not time to care for thy own salvation, for looking after that of others. Or thy charity to others were so great, that it obliges thee to neglect thy own eternal welfare. Or as if there were any better way to fit us to be useful to others, than making this proof of our doctrines ourselves. Certainly heaven is the best fire to light our candle at, and the best book for a preacher to study; and if we would be persuaded to study that more, the church would be provided with more heavenly lights; and when our studies are divine, and our spirits divine, our preaching will also be divine, and we may be called divines indeed. Or, if thy heart have nothing to say against the work, it will trifle away the time in delays, and promise this day and the next, but still keep off from the business. Or, it will give thee a flat denial, and oppose its own unwillingness to thy reason. All this I speak of the heart, so far as it is still carnal; for I know, so far as it is spiritual, it will judge this the sweetest work in the world.

14. What is now to be done? Wilt thou do it if I tell thee? Wouldst thou not say in a like case, "What should I do with a servant that will not work? or with a horse that will not travel? Shall I keep them to look at?" Then faithfully deal thus with thy heart; persuade it to the work, take no denial, chide it for its backwardness, use violence with it. Hast thou no command of thy own thoughts? Is not the subject of thy meditations a matter of choice, especially under this conduct of thy judgment? Surely God gave thee, with thy new nature, some power to govern thy thoughts. Art thou again become a slave to thy depraved nature? Resume thy authority! Call in the Spirit of Christ to thine assistance, who is never backward to so good a work, nor will deny his help in so just a cause. Say to him, "Lord, thou gavest my reason the command of my thoughts and affections; the authority I have received over them is from thee; and now behold, they refuse to obey thine authority: thou commandest me to set them to the work of heavenly meditation, but they rebel and stubbornly refuse the duty. Wilt thou not assist me to exercise

that authority which thou hast given me? O send down thy Spirit, that I may enforce thy commands, and effectually compel them to obey thy will!" Thus thou shalt see thy heart will submit, its resistance be overcome, and its backwardness be turned into cheerful compliance.

15. Thy heart will also be likely to betray thee by trifling, when it should be effectually meditating. Perhaps, when thou hast an hour for meditation, the tim will be spent before thy heart will be serious. Thi doing of duty, as if we did it not, ruins as many as the omission of it. Here let thine eye be always upon thy heart. Look not so much to the time it spends in the duty, as to the quantity and quality of the work that is done. You can tell by his work whether a servant hath been diligent. Ask yourself, "What affections have been yet exercised? How much am I yet got nearer to heaven?" Think not, since thy heart is so trifling, it is better to let it alone; for by this means, thou wilt certainly banish all spiritual obedience; because the best hearts, being but sanctified in part, will resist so far as they are carnal. But rather consider well the corruption of thy nature; and that its sinful indispositions will not supersede the commands of God; nor one sin excuse for another; and that God has appointed means to excite our affections. This self reasoning, self considering duty of heavenly meditation, is the most singular means both to excite and increase love. Therefore stay not from the duty, till thou feelest thy love constrain thee; any more than thou wouldst stay from the fire, till thou feelest thyself warm; but engage in the work till love is excited, and then love will constrain thee to further duty.

16. Thy heart will also be making excursions from thy heavenly meditation to other objects. It will be turning aside, like a careless servant, to talk with every one that passeth by. When there should be nothing in thy mind but heaven, it will be thinking of thy calling or thy affections, or of every bird, or tree, or place thou seest. The cure is here the same as before; use watchfulness and violence. Say to thy heart, "What, did I come hither to think of my worldly business, of persons

places, news, or vanity, or of any thing but heaven, be it ever so good? Canst thou not watch one hour? Wouldst thou leave this world, and dwell for ever with Christ in heaven, and not leave it one hour to dwell with Christ in meditation? Is this thy love to thy friend? Dost thou love Christ, and the place of thy eternal, blessed abode, no more than this?" If the ravening fowls of wandering thoughts devour the meditations intended for heaven, they devour the life and joy of thy thoughts: therefore drive them away from thy sacrifice, and strictly keep thy heart to the work.

17. Abruptly ending thy meditation before it is well begun, is another way in which thy heart will deceive thee. Thou mayst easily perceive this in other duties. In secret prayer, is not thy heart urging thee to cut it short, and frequently making a motion to have done? So in heavenly contemplation, thy heart will be weary of the work, and will stop thy heavenly walk before thou art well warm. But charge it in the name of God to stay, nor do so great a work by halves. Say to it, "Foolish heart! if thou beg a while, and goest away before thou hast thy alms, is not thy begging a lost labour? If thou stoppest before the end of thy journey, is not thy travel lost? Thou camest hither in hope to have a sight of the glory which thou must inherit; and wilt thou stop when thou art almost at the top of the hill, and turn back before thou hast taken thy survey? thou camest hither in hope to speak with God, and wilt thou go before thou hast seen him? Thou camest to bathe thyself in the streams of consolation, and to that end didst unclothe thyself of thy earthly thoughts, and wilt thou only touch the bank and return? Thou comest to spy out the land of promise; go not back without one cluster of grapes, to show thy brethren for their encouragement. Let them see that thou hast tasted of the wine, by the gladness of thy heart; and that thou hast been anointed with the oil, by the cheerfulness of thy countenance; and hast fed of the milk and honey, by the mildness of thy disposition, and the sweetness of thy conversation. This heavenly fire would melt thy frozen heart, and refine and spiritualize it; but it must have time to operate." Thus pursue

the work till something be done, till thy graces be in exercise, thy affections raised, and thy soul refreshed with the delights above; or if thou canst not obtain these ends at once, be the more earnest at another time. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

CHAPTER XVI.

Heavenly contemplation exemplified, and the whole work concluded.

1. The reader's attention excited to the following example of meditation. 2. "The excellencies of heavenly rest. 3. Its nearness, 4. Dreadful to sinners, 5. And joyful to saints; 6. Its dear purchase; 7. Its difference from earth. 8. The heart pleaded with. 9. Unbelief vanished. 10. A careless world pitied. 11–13. Heavenly rest the object of love, 14–21, and joy. 22. The heart's backwardness to heavenly joy lamented. 23–27. Heavenly rest the object of desire." 28. Such meditations as this urged upon the reader; 29. The mischief of neglecting it: 30. The happiness of pursuing it. 31. The author's concluding prayer for the success of his work.

1. And now, reader, according to the above directions, make conscience of daily exercising thy graces in meditation, as well as prayer: retire into some secret place, at a time the most convenient for thyself, and laying aside all worldly thoughts, with all possible seriousness and reverence look up towards heaven, remembering there is thine everlasting rest, study its excellency and reality, and rise from sense to faith, by comparing heavenly with earthly joys: then mix ejaculations with thy soliloquies; till having pleaded the case reverently with God, and seriously with thy own heart, thou hast pleaded thyself from a clod to a flame, from a forgetful sinner, and a lover of the world, to an ardent lover of God, from a fearful coward to a resolved Christian, from an unfruitful sadness to a joyful life: in a word, till thou hast pleaded thy heart from earth to heaven, from conversing below to walking with God; and till thou canst lay thy heart to rest, as in the bosom of Christ, by some such meditation of thy everlasting rest as is here added for thy assistance.

2. "Rest! How sweet the sound! It is melody to my

ears! It lies as a reviving cordial at my heart, and from thence sends forth lively spirits which beat through all the pulses of my soul! Rest, not as the stone that rests on the earth, not as this flesh shall rest in the grave, nor such a rest as the carnal world desires. O blessed rest! When we rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! When we shall rest from sin, but not from worship; from suffering and sorrow, but not from joy! O blessed day! When I shall rest with God! When I shall rest in the bosom of my Lord! When I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing, and praising! When my perfect soul and body shall together perfectly enjoy the most perfect God! When God, who is love itself, shall perfectly love me, and rest in his love to me, as I shall rest in my love to him; and rejoice over me with joy, and joy over me with singing, as I shall rejoice in him!

3. "How near is that most blessed, joyful day! It comes apace. He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Though my Lord seems to delay his coming, yet a little while and he will be here. What is a few hundred years when they are over? How surely will his sign appear? How suddenly will he seize upon the careless world, even as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth unto the west! He who is gone hence shall so come. Methinks I hear his trumpet sound! Methinks I see him coming with clouds, and his attending angels in majesty and in glory!

4. "O secure sinners! What now will you do? Where will you hide yourselves? What shall cover you? mountains are gone; the heavens and the earth, which were, are passed away; the devouring fire hath consumed all, except yourselves, who must be the fuel for ever. O that you could consume as soon as the earth; and melt away as did the heavens! Ah, these wishes are now but vain! The Lamb himself would have been your friend; he would have loved you, and ruled you, and now have saved you; but you would not then, and now it is too late. Never cry, Lord, Lord, too late, too late, man. Why dost thou look about? Can any save thee?

Whither dost thou run? Can any hide thee? O wretch, that hast brought thyself to this!

5. "Now, blessed saints, that have believed and obeyed! this is the end of faith and patience. This is it for which you prayed and waited. Do you now repent your sufferings and sorrows, your self denying and holy walking? Are your tears of repentance now bitter or sweet? See how the Judge smiles upon you: there is love in his looks; the titles of Redeemer, Husband, Head are written in his amiable, shining face. Hark, he calls you; he bids you stand here on his right hand: fear not, for there he sets his sheep. O joyful sentence! Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. He takes you by the hand, the door is open, the kingdom is his, and therefore yours; there is your place before his throne; the Father receives you as the spouse of his Son, and bids you welcome to the crown of glory. Ever so unworthy, you must be crowned. This was the project of free redeeming grace, the purpose of eternal love. O blessed grace! O blessed love! O how love and joy will rise! But I cannot express it, I cannot conceive it.

6. "This is that joy which was procured by sorrow, that crown which was procured by the cross. My Lord wept, that now my tears might be wiped away; he bled, that I might now rejoice; he was forsaken, that I might not now be forsook; he then died, that I might now live. O free mercy, that can now exalt so vile a wretch! Free to me, though dear to Christ! Free grace that hath chosen me, when thousands were forsaken! When my companions in sin must burn in hell, I must here rejoice in rest! Here must I live with all these saints! O comfortable meeting of my old acquaintance, with whom I prayed, and wept, and suffered, and spoke often of this day and place! I see the grave could not detain you; the same love hath redeemed and saved you also.

7. "This is not like our cottages of clay, our prisons our earthly dwellings. This voice of joy is not like our old complaints, our impatient groans and sighs; nor this melodious praise like the scoffs and revilings, or the

oaths and curses, which we heard on earth. This body is not like that we had, nor this soul like the soul we had, nor this life like the life we lived. We have changed our place and state, our clothes and thoughts, our looks, language, and company. Before, a saint was weak and despised; so proud and peevish, we could often scarce discern his graces: but now how glorious a thing is a saint! Where is now their body of sin, which wearied themselves and those about them? Where are now our different judgments, reproachful names, divided spirits, exasperated passions, strange looks, uncharitable censures? Now we are all of one judgment, of one name, of one heart, house, and glory. O sweet reconciliation! Happy union! Now the gospel shall no more be dishonoured through our folly. No more, my soul, shalt thou lament the sufferings of the saints, or the church's ruins, nor mourn thy suffering friends, nor weep over their dying beds, or their graves. Thou shalt never suffer thy old temptations from Satan, the world, or thy own flesh. Thy pains and sicknesses are all cured; thy body shall no more burthen thee with weakness and weariness; thy aching head and heart, thy hunger and thirst, thy sleep and labour, are all gone. O what a mighty change is this! From the dung hill to the throne! From persecuting sinners to praising saints! From a vile body to this which shines as the brightness of the firmament! From a sense of God's displeasure to the perfect enjoyment of him in love! From all my doubts and fears to this possession, which puts me out of doubt! From all my fearful thoughts of death to this joyful life! Blessed change! Farewell, sin and sorrow, for ever: farewell, my rocky, proud, unbelieving heart; my worldly, sensual, carnal heart: and welcome now my most holy, heavenly nature. Farewell, repentance, faith, and hope, and welcome love, and joy, and praise. I shall now have my harvest without ploughing or sowing; my joy without a preacher or a promise; even all from the face of God himself. Whatever mixture is in the streams, there is nothing but pure joy in the fountain. Here shall I be encircled with eternity and ever live, and ever, ever praise the Lord My face will not wrinkle, nor my hair

be gray; for this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. O death, where is now thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! The date of my lease will no more expire, nor shall I trouble myself with thoughts of death, nor lose my joys through fear of losing them. When millions of ages are passed, my glory is but beginning; and when millions more are passed, it is no nearer ending. Every day is all noon every month is harvest, every year is a jubilee, every age is full manhood, and all this is one eternity. O blessed eternity! The glory of my glory! the perfection of my perfection!

8. "Ah drowsy, earthly heart! How coldly dost thou think of this reviving day! Hadst thou rather set down in dirt, than walk in the palace of God? Art thou now remembering thy worldly business, or thinking of thy lusts, earthly delights and merry company? Is it better to be here, than above with God? Is the company better? Are the pleasures greater? Come away; make no excuse, nor delay; God commands, and I command thee; gird up thy loins; ascend the mount; look about thee with faith and seriousness. Look not back upon the way of the wilderness except it be to compare the kingdom to that howling desert, more sensibly to perceive the wide difference. Yonder is my Father's glory; yonder, O my soul! must thou remove, when thou departest from this body; and when the power of thy Lord hath raised it again, and joined thee to it, yonder must thou live with God for ever. There is the glorious New Jerusalem, the gates of pearl, the foundations of pearl, the streets and pavements of transparent gold. That sun, which lighteth all this world, will be useless there; even thyself shalt be as bright as yonder shining sun; God will be the sun, and Christ the light, and in his light shalt thou have light.

9. "O my soul! dost thou stagger at the promise of God through unbelief? I much suspect thee: didst thou believe indeed thou wouldst be more affected with it. Is it not under the hand, the seal and oath of God? Can God lie? Can he that is truth itself be false? What

need hath God to flatter or deceive thee? Why should he promise thee more than he will perform? Dare not to charge the wise, almighty, faithful God with this. How many of the promises have been performed to thee in thy conversion! Would God so powerfully concur with a feigned word? O wretched heart of unbelief! Hath God made thee a promise of rest, and wilt thou come short of it? Thine eyes, thy ears, and all thy senses, may prove delusions, sooner than a promise of God can delude thee. Thou mayst be surer of that which is written in the word, than if thou see it with thine eyes, or feel it with thine hands. Art thou sure thou art alive, or that this is earth thou standest on, or that thine eyes see the sun? As sure is all this glory to the saints; as sure shall I be higher than yonder stars, and live for ever in the holy city, and joyfully sound forth the praise of my Redeemer; if I be not shut out by this evil heart of unbelief, causing me to depart from the living God.

10. "And is this rest so sweet, and so sure? Then what means the careless world? Know they what they neglect? Did they ever hear of it, or are they yet asleep, or are they dead? Do they certainly know that the crown is before them, while they thus sit still or follow trifles? Undoubtedly they are beside themselves, to mind so much their provision by the way, when they are hastening so fast to another world, and their eternal happiness lies at stake. Were there left one spark of reason, they would never sell their rest for toil, nor their glory for worldly vanities, nor venture heaven for sinful pleasure. Poor men! O that you would once consider what you hazard, and then you would scorn these tempting baits! Blessed for ever be that love, which hath rescued me from this bewitching darkness!

11. 'Draw yet nearer, O my soul! with thy most fervent love. Here is a matter for it to work upon, something worth thy loving. O see what beauty presents itself! Is not all the beauty in the world united here? Is not all other beauty but deformity? Dost thou now need to be persuaded to love? Here is a feast for thine eyes, and all the powers of thy soul; dost thou need entreaties to feed upon it? Canst thou love a little shining earth,

a walking piece of clay? And canst thou not love that God, that Christ, that glory, which is so truly and unmeasurably lovely? Thou canst love thy friend, because he loves thee; and is the love of thy friend like the love of Christ? Their weeping or bleeding for thee do not ease thee, nor stay the course of thy tears or blood: but the tears and blood that fell from thy Lord, have a sovereign healing virtue. O my soul! if love deserves, and should beget love, what incomprehensible love is here before thee! Pour out all the store of thy affections here, and all is too little. O that it were more! O that it were many thousand times more! Let him be first served, that served thee first. Let him have the first born, and strength of thy soul, who parted with strength and life in love for thee. O my soul! Dost thou love for excellency? Yonder is the region of light. This is a land of darkness. Yonder twinkling stars, that shining moon, and radiant sun, are all but lanterns hung out of thy Father's house, to light thee while thou walkest in this dark world: but how little dost thou know the glory and blessedness that is within! Dost thou love for suitableness? What person more suitable than Christ! His Godhead and humanity, his fulness and freeness, his willingness and constancy, all proclaim him thy most suitable friend. What state more suitable to thy misery, than mercy? Or to thy sin and pollution, than honour and perfection? What place more suitable to thee than heaven? Does this world agree with thy desires? Hast thou not had a sufficient trial of it? Or dost thou love for interest and near relation? Where hast thou better interest than in heaven, or nearer relation than there?

12. "Dost thou love for acquaintance and familiarity? Though thine eyes have never seen thy Lord, yet thou hast heard his voice, received his benefits, and lived in his bosom: he taught thee to know thyself and him; he opened thee that first window through which thou sawest into heaven. Hast thou forgotten since thy heart was careless, and he awakened it; hard, and he softened it; stubborn, and he made it yield; at peace, and he troubled it; whole, and he broke it; and broken, till he healed it again? Hast thou forgotten the times when he

found thee in tears; when he heard thy secret sighs and groans, and left all to come and comfort thee; when he took thee, as it were, in his arms, and asked thee, 'Poor soul, what ails thee? Dost thou weep, when I have wept so much? Be of good cheer; thy wounds are saving, and not deadly; it is I have made them, who mean thee no hurt; though I let out thy blood, I will not let out thy life.' I remember his voice. How gently did he take me up! How carefully did he dress my wounds! Methinks I hear him still saying to me, 'Poor sinner, though thou hast dealt unkindly with me, and cast me off; yet I will not do so by thee. Though thou hast set light by me and all my mercies, yet they and myself are all thine. What wouldst thou have that I can give thee? And what dost thou want that I cannot give thee? If any thing I have will pleasure thee, thou shalt have it. Wouldst thou have pardon? I freely forgive thee all the debt. Wouldst thou have grace and peace? Thou shalt have them both. Wouldst thou have myself? Behold I am thine, thy Friend, thy Lord, thy Brother, Husband, and Head. Wouldst thou have the Father? I will bring thee to him, and thou shalt have him, in and by me.' These were my Lord's reviving words. After all, when I was doubtful of his love, methinks I yet remember his overcoming arguments. 'Have I done so much, sinner, to testify my love, and yet dost thou doubt? Have I offered thee myself and love so long, and yet dost thou question my willingness to be thine? At what dearer rate should I tell thee that I love thee? Wilt thou not believe my bitter passion proceeded from love? Have I made myself in the gospel a lion to thine enemies, and a lamb to thee, and dost thou overlook my lamb-like nature? Had I been willing to let thee perish, what need I have done and suffered so much? What need I follow thee with so much patience and importunity? Why dost thou tell me of thy wants; have I not enough or me and thee? Or of thy unworthiness; for if thou wast thyself worthy, what shouldst thou do with my worthiness? Did I ever invite, or save, the worthy and the righteous; or is there any such upon earth? Hast thou nothing; art thou lost and miserable, helpless and

forlorn? Dost thou believe I am an all-sufficient Saviour, and wouldst thou have me? Lo, I am thine, take me; if thou art willing, I am; and neither sin, nor Satan, shall break the match.' These, O these were the blessed words which his Spirit from his gospel spoke unto me, till he made me cast myself at his feet, and cry out, 'My Saviour and my Lord, thou hast broke, thou hast revived my heart; thou hast overcome, thou hast won my heart take it, it is thine; if such a heart can please thee, tak i; if it cannot, make it such as thou wouldst have it. Thus, O my soul! mayst thou remember the sweet familiarity thou hast had with Christ; therefore, if acquaintance will cause affection, let out thy heart unto him. It is he hath stood by thy bed of sickness, hath eased thy pains, refreshed thy weariness, and removed thy fears. He hath been always ready, when thou hast earnestly sought him; hath met thee in public and private; hath been found of thee in the congregation, in thy house, in thy closet, in the field, and in thy waking nights, in thy deepest dangers.

13. "If bounty and compassion be an attractive of love, how unmeasurably then am I bound to love him! All the mercies that have filled up my life, all the places that ever I abode in, all the societies and persons I have been conversant with, all my employments and relations, every condition I have been in, and every change I have passed through, all tell me that the fountain is overflowing goodness. Lord, what a sum of love am I indebted to thee! And how does my debt continually increase! How should I love again for so much love! But shall I dare to think of requiting thee, or of recompensing all thy love with mine! Will my mite requite thee for thy golden mines; my seldom wishes, for thy constant bounty, mine which is nothing, or not mine, for thine which is infinite and thine own? Shall I dare to contend in love with thee; or set my borrowed, languid spark, against the Son of love! Can I love as high, as deep, as broad, as long, as love itself; as much as he that made me, and that made me love, and gave me all that little which I have? As I cannot match thee in the works of power, nor make, nor preserve, nor rule the worlds; no more

can I match thee in love. No, Lord, I yield; I am overcome. O blessed conquest! Go on victoriously, and still prevail, and triumph in thy love. The captive of love shall proclaim thy victory! When thou leadest me in triumph from earth to heaven, from death to life, from the tribunal to the throne; myself, and all that see it, shall acknowledge thou hast prevailed, and all shall say, behold how he loved him! Yet let me love in subjection to thy love; as thy redeemed captive, though not thy peer. Shall I not love at all because I cannot reach thy measure? O that I could feelingly say, I love thee, even as I love my friend, and myself! Though I cannot say, as the apostle, Thou knowest that I love thee; yet I can say, Lord, thou knowest that I would love thee. I am angry with my heart that it doth not love thee; I chide it, yet it doth not mend; I reason with it, and would fain persuade it, yet I do not perceive it stir; I rub and chafe it in the use of thy ordinances, and yet I feel it not warm within me. Unworthy soul! Is not thine eye now upon the only lovely object? Art thou not beholding the ravishing glory of the saints? And dost thou not love? Art thou not a rational soul, and should not reason tell thee that earth is a dungeon to the celestial glory? Art thou not thyself a spirit, and shouldst thou not love God, who is a Spirit, and the Father of spirits? Why dost thou love so much thy perishing clay, and love no more the heavenly glory? Shalt thou love when thou comest there; when the Lord shall take thy carcass from the grave, and make thee shine as the sun in glory for ever and ever; shalt thou then love, or shalt thou not? Is not the place a meeting of lovers? Is not the life a state of love? Is it not the great marriage day of the Lamb? Is not the employment there the work of love, where the souls with Christ take their fill? O then, my soul, begin it here! Be sick of love now, that thou mayst be well with love there. Keep thyself now in the love of God; and let neither life nor death, nor any thing, separate thee from it; and thou shalt be kept in the fulness of love for ever, and nothing shall imbitter or abate thy pleasure; for the Lord hath prepared a city of love, a

place for communicating love to his chosen, and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

14. "Awake then, O my drowsy soul! To sleep under the light of grace is unreasonable, much more in the approach of the light of glory. Come forth, my dull, congealed spirit, thy Lord bids thee rejoice, and again rejoice. Thou hast lain long enough in thy prison of flesh, where Satan hath been thy jailer, cares have been thy irons, fears thy scourges, and thy food the bread and water of affliction; where sorrows have been thy lodging, and thy sins and foes have made the bed, and an unbelieving heart hath been the gates and bars that have kept thee in: the angel of the covenant now calls thee, and strikes thee, and bids thee arise, and follow him. Up, O my soul, and cheerfully obey, and thy bolts and bars shall all fly open; follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Shouldst thou fear to follow such a guide? Can the sun lead thee to a state of darkness? Will he lead thee to death, who died to save thee from it? Follow him, and he will show thee the paradise of God; he will give thee a sight of the New Jerusalem, and a taste of the tree of life. Come forth, my drooping soul, and lay aside thy winter dress; let it be seen by thy garments of joy and praise, that the spring is come; and as thou now seest thy comforts green, thou shalt shortly see them white and ripe for harvest, and then thou shalt be called to reap, and gather, and take possession. Should I suspend and delay my joys till then? Should not the joys of spring go before the joys of harvest? Is title nothing before possession? Is the heir in no better state than a slave? My Lord hath taught me to rejoice in hope of his glory; and how to see it through the bars of a prison; for when I am persecuted for righteousness' sake, he commanded me to rejoice, and be exceeding glad, because my reward in heaven is great. I know he would have my joys exceed my sorrows; and as much as he delights in the humble and contrite, he yet more delights in the soul that delights in him. Hath my Lord spread me a table in this wilderness, and furnished it with the promises of everlasting glory, and set before

me angel's food? Doth he frequently and importunately invite me to sit down, and feed, and spare not? Hath he to that end furnished me with reason, and faith, and a joyful disposition, and is it possible that he should be unwilling to have me rejoice? Is it not his command, to delight thyself in the Lord; and his promise, to give thee the desires of thine heart? Art thou not charged to rejoice evermore: yea, to sing aloud, and shout for joy? Why should I then be discouraged? My God is willing if I were but willing. He is delighted in my delights. He would have it my constant frame and daily business to be near him in my believing meditations, and to live in the sweetest thoughts of his goodness. O blessed employment, fit for the sons of God? But thy feast, my Lord, is nothing to me without an appetite: thou hast set the dainties of heaven before me; but alas! I am blind, and cannot see them; I am sick, I cannot relish them; I am so benumbed that I cannot put forth a hand to take them. I therefore humbly beg this grace, that as thou hast opened heaven to me in thy word, so thou wouldst open mine eyes to see it, and my heart to delight in it; else heaven will be no heaven to me. O thou Spirit of life, breathe upon thy graces in me; take me by the hand and lift me from earth, that I may see what glory thou hast prepared for them that love thee!

15. "Away then ye soul tormenting cares and fears, ye heart vexing sorrows: at least forbear a little while; stand by; stay here below till I go up and see my rest. The way is strange to me but not to Christ. There was the eternal abode of his glorious Deity; and thither hath he also brought his glorified flesh. It was his work to purchase it; it is his to prepare it, and to prepare me for it, and bring me to it. The eternal God of truth hath given me his promise, his seal, and oath, that, believing in Christ, I shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Thither shall my soul be speedily removed, and my body very shortly follow. And can my tongue say that I shall shortly and surely live with God; and yet my heart not leap within me? Can I say it with faith and not with joy! Ah! faith, how sensibly do I now perceive thy weakness! But though unbelief darken my light, and

kill my life, and suppress my joys, it shall not be able to conquer and destroy me; though it envy all my comforts, yet some in spite of it I shall even here receive; and if that did not hinder what abundance might I have! The light of heaven would shine into my heart; and I might be almost as familiar there as I am on earth. Come away then, my soul; stop thine ears to the ignorant language of infidelity; thou art able to answer all its arguments; or if thou art not, yet tread them under thy feet. Come away; stand not looking on that grave, nor turning those bones, nor reading thy lesson now in the dust, those lines will soon be wiped out. But lift up thy head, and look to heaven and see thy name in golden letters, written before the foundation of the world, in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain. What if an angel should tell thee that there is a mansion in heaven prepared for thee, that it shall certainly be thine for ever; would not such a message make thee glad? And dost thou make light of the infallible word of promise, which was delivered by the Spirit, and even by the Son himself? Suppose thou hadst seen a fiery chariot come for thee, and fetch thee up to heaven, like Elijah; would not this rejoice thee? But thy Lord assures thee that the soul of a Lazarus hath a convoy of angels to carry it into Abraham's bosom. Shall a drunkard be so merry among his cups, or the glutton in his delicious fare, and shall not I rejoice who must shortly be in heaven! Can meat and drink delight me when I hunger and thirst; can I find pleasure in walks and gardens and convenient dwellings; can beautiful objects delight mine eyes; or grateful odours my smell; or melody my ears; and shall not the forethought of celestial bliss delight me? Methinks among my books I could employ myself in sweet content, and bid the world farewell, and pity the rich and the great that know not this happiness; what then will my happiness in heaven be, where my knowledge will be perfect! If the queen of Sheba came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and see his glory; how cheerfully should I pass from earth to heaven, to see the glory of the eternal Majesty, and attain the height of wisdom; compared with which the

most learned on earth are but fools and idiots! What if God had made me commander of earth; what if I could remove mountains, heal diseases with a word or a touch, or cast out devils; should I not rejoice in such privileges and honours as these; and shall I not much more rejoice that my name is written in heaven? I cannot here enjoy my parents, or my near and beloved friends, without some delight; especially when I did freely let out my affection to my friend, how sweet was that exercise of my love! O what will it then be to live in the perpetual love of God! For brethren to dwell together in unity here, how good and how pleasant it is! To see a family live in love, husband and wife, parents, children, and servants, doing all in love to one another; to see a town live together in love, without any envyings, brawlings, or contentions, lawsuits, factions, or divisions, but every man loving his neighbour as himself, thinking they can never do too much for one another, but striving to go beyond each other in love; how happy, how delightful a sight is this! O then what a blessed society will the family of heaven be, and those peaceful inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, where there is no division, nor differing judgments, no disaffection nor strangeness, no deceitful friendship, no, not one unkind expression, nor an angry look or thought; but all are one in Christ, who is one with the Father, and all live in the love of him, who is love itself! The soul is not more where it lives, than where it loves. How near then will my soul be united to God, when I shall so heartily, strongly, and incessantly love him! Ah wretched, unbelieving heart, that can think of such a day, and work, and life as this, with such low and feeble joys! But my future enjoying joys will be more lively!

16. "How delightful is it to me to behold and study these inferior works of creation! What a beautiful fabric do we here dwell in; the floor so dressed with herbs and flowers and trees, and watered with springs and rivers; the roof so wide expanded, so admirably adorned! What wonders do sun, moon, and stars, seas, and winds, contain! And hath God prepared such a house for corruptible flesh, for a soul imprisoned; and doth he bestow

so many millions of wonders upon his enemies! O what a dwelling must that be, which he prepares for his dearly beloved children; and how will the glory of the New Jerusalem exceed all the present glory of the creatures! Arise then, O my soul, in thy contemplation; and let thy thoughts of that glory as far exceed in sweetness thy thoughts of the excellencies below! Fear not to go out of this body, and this world, when thou must make so happy a change: but say, as one did when he was dying, I am glad, and even leap for joy, that the time is come in which that mighty JEHOVAH whose Majesty, in my search of nature I have admired, whose goodness I have adored, whom by faith I have desired and panted after, will now show himself to me face to face.

17. "How wonderful also are the works of Providence! How delightful to see the great God interest himself in the safety and advancement of a few humble, praying, but despised persons; and to review those special mercies with which my own life hath been adorned and sweetened! How often have my prayers been heard, my tears regarded, my troubled soul relieved! How often hath my Lord bid me be of good cheer! What a support are these experiences, these clear testimonies of my Father's love, to my fearful unbelieving heart! O then what a blessed day will that be, when I shall have all mercy, perfection of mercy, and fully enjoy the Lord of mercy; when I shall stand on the shore, and look back on the raging seas I have safely passed; when I shall review my pains and sorrows, my fears and tears, and possess the glory which was the end of all! If one drop of lively faith was mixed with these considerations, what a heaven-ravishing heart should I carry within me! Fain would I believe; Lord, help my unbelief.

18. "How sweet, O my soul, have ordinances been to thee! What delight hast thou had in prayer, and thanksgiving, under heavenly sermons, and in the society of saints, and to see the Lord adding to the church such as should be saved! How can my heart then conceive the joy, which I shall have to see the perfected church in heaven, and to be admitted into the celestial temple, and with the heavenly host praise the Lord for

ever! If the word of God was sweeter to Job than his necessary food; and to David, than honey and the honey comb; and was the joy and rejoicing of Jeremiah's heart; how blessed a day will that be, when we fully enjoy the Lord of this world, and shall no more need these written precepts and promises, nor read any book but the face of the glorious God! If they that heard Christ speak on earth, were astonished at his wisdom and answers, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; how shall I then be affected to behold him in his majesty!

19. "Can the prospect of this glory make others welcome the cross, and even refuse deliverance; and can not it make thee cheerful under lesser sufferings? Can it sweeten the flames of martyrdom; and not sweeten thy life, or thy sickness, or thy natural death? Is it not the same heaven which they and I must live in? Is not their God, their Christ, their crown, and mine the same? And shall I look upon it with an eye so dim, a heart so dull, a countenance so dejected? Some small foretastes of it have I myself had; and how much more delightful have they been, than any earthly things ever were; and what then will the full enjoyment be?

20. "What a beauty is there here in the imperfect graces of the Spirit! Alas! how small are these, to what we shall enjoy in our perfect state! What a happy life should I here live, could I but love God as much as I would; could I be all love, and always loving! O my soul! what wouldst thou give for such a life! Had I such apprehensions of God, such knowledge of his word as I desire; I could fully trust him in all my straits; could I be as lively as I would in every duty; could I make God my constant desire and delight; I would not envy the world their honours or pleasures. What a blessed state, O my soul! wilt thou shortly be in, when thou shalt have far more of these than thou canst now desire, and shalt exercise thy perfected graces in the immediate vision of God, and not in the dark, and at a distance, as now!

21. "Is the sinning, afflicted, persecuted church, so much more excellent than any particular gracious soul?

What then will the church be, when it is fully gathered and glorified; when it is ascended from the valley of tears to mount Sion; when it shall sin and suffer no more? The glory of the old Jerusalem will be darkness and deformity to the glory of the new. What cause shall we have then to shout for joy, when we shall see how glorious the heavenly temple is, and remember the meanness of the church on earth!"

[*N. B. If this chapter seem too long to be read at once, it may be properly divided here.*]

22. "But, alas! what a loss am I at in the midst of my contemplations! I thought my heart had all the while attended, but I see it doth not. What life is there in empty thoughts and words, without affections! Neither God nor I find pleasure in them. Where hast thou been, unworthy heart, while I was opening to thee the everlasting treasures? Art thou not ashamed to complain so much of an uncomfortable life, and to murmur at God for filling thee with sorrows; when he in vain offers thee the delight of angels? Hadst thou now but followed me close, it would have made thee revive and leap for joy, and forget thy pains and sorrows. Did I think my heart had been so backward to rejoice?

23. "Lord, thou hast reserved my perfect joys for heaven: therefore, help me to desire till I may possess, and let me long when I cannot, as I would rejoice. O my soul, thou knowest to thy sorrow, that thou art not yet at thy rest. When shall I arrive at that safe and quiet harbour, where there are none of these storms, waves, and dangers; when I shall never more have a weary restless night or day! Then my life will not be such a mixture of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow: nor shall flesh and spirit be combating within me; nor faith and unbelief, humility and pride, maintain a continual conflict. O when shall I be past these soul-tormenting fears, and cares, and griefs! When shall I be out of this soul-contradicting, ensnaring, deceitful flesh; this corruptible body, this vain, vexatious world! Alas, that I must stand and see the church and cause of Christ tossed about in contention, and made subservient to private interests, or deluded fancies! There is none of this

disorder in the heavenly Jerusalem; there I shall find an harmonious consent of perfected spirits, in obeying and praising their everlasting King. O how much better to be a door keeper there, than the commander of this tumultuous world! Why am I no more weary of this weariness! Why do I so forget my resting place! Up then, O my soul, in thy most raised and fervent desires! Stay not till this flesh can desire with thee; expect not that sense should apprehend thy blessed object, and tell thee when and what to desire. Doth not the dulness of thy desires after rest, accuse thee of most detestable ingratitude and folly? Must thy Lord procure thee a rest at so dear a rate, and dost thou no more value it? Must he go before to prepare so glorious a mansion for such a wretch, and art thou loath to go and possess it? Shall the Lord of glory be desirous of thy company, and thou not desirous of his? Must earth become a very hell to thee, before thou art willing to be with God? Behold the most lovely creature, or the most desirable state, and tell me, where wouldst thou be, if not with God! Poverty is a burthen; riches a snare; sickness unpleasing; health unsafe; the frowning world bruises thy heel; the smiling world stings thee to the heart; so much as the world is loved and delighted in, it hurts and endangers the lover; and if it may not be loved, why should it be desired? If thou art applauded, it proves the most contagious breath; if thou art vilified, or unkindly used, methinks this should not entice thy love. If thy successful labours, and thy godly friends, seem better to thee than a life with God, it is time for God to take them from thee. If thy studies have been sweet, have they not also been bitter? And, at best, what are they to the everlasting views of the God of truth? Thy friends here have been thy delight; and have they not also been thy vexation and grief? They are gracious, and are they not also sinful? They are kind, and are they not soon displeased? They are humble, but alas, how proud also! Their graces are sweet, and their gifts helpful; but are not their corruptions bitter, and their imperfections hurtful? And art thou so loath to go from them to thy God?

24. "O my soul, look above this world of sorrows! Hast thou so long felt the smarting rod of affliction, and no better understood its meaning? Is not every stroke to drive thee hence? Is not its voice like that to Elijah, what dost thou here? Dost thou forget thy Lord's prediction, In the world ye shall have tribulation, in me ye may have peace? Ah! my dear Lord, I feel thy meaning; it is written in my flesh, engraved in my bones. My heart thou aimest at; thy rod drives, thy silken cord of love draws; and all to bring it to thyself. Lord, can such a heart be worth thy having? Make it worthy, and then it is thine; take it thyself, and then take me. This clod hath life to stir, but not to rise. As the feeble child to the tender mother, it looketh up to thee, and stretcheth out the hands, and fain would have thee take it up. Though I cannot say, my soul longeth after thee; yet I can say, I long for such a heart. The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. My spirit cries, let thy kingdom come, or let me come to thy kingdom; but the flesh is afraid thou shouldst hear my prayer, and take me at my word. O blessed be thy grace which makes use of my corruptions to kill themselves; for I fear my fears, and sorrow for my sorrows, and long for greater longings; and thus the painful means of attaining my desires increase my weariness, and that makes me groan to be at rest.

25. "Indeed, Lord, my soul itself is in a strait, and what to choose I know not; but thou knowest what to give: to depart, and be with thee, is far better. But to abide in the flesh seems needful. Thou knowest I am not weary of the work, but of the sorrow and sin; I am willing to stay while thou wilt employ me, and dispatch the work thou hast put into my hands: but I beseech thee, stay no longer when this is done; and while I must be here, let me be still amending and ascending; make me still better, and take me at the best. I dare not be so impatient, as to importune thee to cut off my time, and snatch me hence unready; because I know my everlasting state so much depends on the improvemen of this life. Nor would I stay when my work is done; and remain here sinning, while my brethren are triumphing. Thy footsteps bruise this worm, while those stars

shine in the firmament of glory. Yet I am thy child as well as they; Christ is my Head as well as theirs; why is there then so great a distance? But I acknowledge the equity of thy ways; though we are all children, yet I am the prodigal, and therefore more fit in this remote country to feed on husks, while they are always with thee, and possess thy glory. They were once themselves in my condition, and I shall shortly be in theirs. They were of the lowest form, before they came to the highest, they suffered, before they reigned: they came out of great tribulation, who are now before thy throne; and shall not I be content to come to the crown as they did; and to drink of their cup, before I sit with them in the kingdom? Lord, I am content to stay thy time, and go thy way, so thou wilt exalt me also in thy season, and take me into thy barn, when thou seest me ripe. In the mean time I may desire, though I am not to repine; I may believe and wish, though not make any sinful haste; I am willing to wait for thee, but not to lose thee; and when thou seest me too contented with thine absence, then quicken my languid desires, and blow up the dying spark of love; and leave me not till I am able unfeignedly to cry out, 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God!' My conversation is in heaven, from whence I look for a Saviour. My affections are set on things above, where Christ sitteth and my life is hid. I walk by faith, and not by sight; willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

26. "What interest hath this empty world in me; and what is there in it that may seem so lovely, as to entice my desires from my God or make me loath to come away? Methinks, when I look upon it with a deliberate eye, it is a howling wilderness, and too many of its inhabitants are untamed monsters; I can view all its beauty as deformity; and drown all its pleasure in a few penitent tears; or the wind of a sigh will scatter them away. O let not this flesh so seduce my soul, as to make it prefer this weary life before the joys that are about thy

throne! And though death itself be unwelcome to nature, yet let thy grace make thy glory appear to me so desirable, that the king of terrors may be the messenger of my joy! Let not my soul be ejected by violence, and dispossessed of its habitation against its will; but draw it to thyself by the secret power of thy love, as the sunshine in the spring draws forth the creatures from their winter cells; meet it half way and entice it to thee, as the loadstone doth the iron, and as the greater flame attracts the less! Dispel therefore the clouds that hide thy love from me; or remove the scales that hinder mine eyes from beholding thee; for the beams that stream from thy face, and the foretaste of thy great salvation, and nothing else, can make a soul unfeignedly say, now let thy servant depart in peace! But it is not thy ordinary discoveries that will here suffice; as the work is greater, so must thy help be. O turn these fears into strong desires, and this loathness to die into longings after thee! While I must be absent from thee, let my soul as heartily groan, as my body doth under its want of health! If I have any more time to spend on earth, let me live, as without the world, in thee, as I have sometime lived as without thee in the world! While I have a thought to think, let me not forget thee; or a tongue to move, let me mention thee with delight; or a breath to breathe, let it be after thee, and for thee; or a knee to bend, let it daily bow at thy footstool; and when by sickness thou confinest me, do thou make my bed, number my pains, and put all my tears into thy bottle!

27. "As my flesh desired what my spirit abhorred, so now let my spirit desire that day which my flesh abhorreth; that my friends may not with so much sorrow wait for the departure of my soul, as my soul with joy shall wait for its own departure! then let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his; even a removal to that glory that shall never end! Then let thy convoy of angels bring my departing soul among the perfected spirits of the just, and let me follow my dear friends that have died in Christ before me; and while my sorrowing friends are weeping over my grave, let my spirit be reposed with thee in rest; and while my

corpse shall lie rotting in the dark, let my soul be in the inheritance of the saints in light! O thou that numberest the very hairs of my head, number all the days that my body lies in the dust; and thou that writest all my members in thy book, keep an account of my scattered bones! O my Saviour hasten the time of my return; send forth thy angels, and let that dreadful joyful trumpet sound! Delay not, lest the living give up their hopes; delay not, lest earth should grow like hell, and thy church, by division, be all crumbled to dust; delay not, lest thy enemies get advantage of thy flock, and lest pride, hypocrisy, sensuality and unbelief prevail against thy little remnant, and share among them thy whole inheritance, and when thou comest thou find not faith on the earth; delay not, lest the grave should boast of victory, and having learned rebellion of its guest, should refuse to deliver thee up thy due! O hasten that great resurrection day, when thy command shall go forth, and none shall disobey; when the sea and earth shall yield up their hostages, and all that sleep in the grave shall awake, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; when the seed which thou sowedst corruptible, shall come forth incorruptible; and graves that received rottenness and dust, shall return thee glorious stars and suns! Therefore dare I lay down my carcass in the dust, entrusting it, not to a grave, but to thee, and therefore my flesh shall rest in hope, till thou shalt raise it to the possession of everlasting rest. Return, O Lord, how long? O let thy kingdom come! Thy desolate bride saith, Come! for thy Spirit within her saith Come; and teacheth her thus to pray with groanings which cannot be uttered; yea, the whole creation saith, Come, waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God; thou thyself hast said Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!"

28. Thus, reader, I have given thee my best advice for maintaining a heavenly conversation. If thou canst not thus meditate methodically and fully, yet do it as thou canst: only be sure and do it seriously and frequently. Be acquainted with this heavenly work, and thou wilt,

in some degree, be acquainted with God; thy joys will be spiritual, prevalent, and lasting, according to the nature of their blessed objects; thou wilt have comfort in life and death: when thou hast neither wealth nor health, nor the pleasure of this world, yet wilt thou have comfort: without the presence, or help of any friend, without a minister, without a book, when all means are denied thee, or taken from thee, yet mayst thou have vigorous real comfort. Thy graces will be mighty, ctive, and victorious; and the daily joy, which is thus fetched from heaven, will be thy strength. Thou wilt be as one that stands on the top of an exceeding high mountain; he looks down on the world as if it were quite below him; fields and woods, cities and towns, seem to him but little spots. Thus despicably wilt thou look on all things here below. The greatest princes will seem but as grasshoppers; the busy, contentious, covetous world, but as a heap of ants. Men's threatenings will be no terror to thee; nor the honours of this world any strong enticement; temptations will be more harmless, as having lost their strength; and afflictions less grievous, as having lost their sting; and every mercy will be better-known and relished. It is now under God, in thy own choice, whether thou wilt live this blessed life or not; and whether all this pains I have taken for thee shall prosper, or be lost. If it be lost through thy laziness, thou thyself wilt prove the greatest loser. O man! what hast thou to mind but God and heaven? Art thou not almost out of this world already? Dost thou not look every day, when one disease or other will let out thy soul? Does not the grave wait to be thine house; and worms to feed upon thy face and heart? What if thy pulse must beat a few strokes more! What if thou hast a little longer to breathe, before thou breathe out thy last; a few more nights to sleep, before thou sleepest in the dust! Alas, what will this be, when it is gone! And is it not almost gone already? Very shortly thou wilt see thy glass run out, and say to thyself, My life is done! My time is none! 'Tis past recalling There's nothing now but heaven or hell before me! Where then should thy heart be now but in heaven?

Didst thou know what a dreadful thing it is to have a doubt of heaven when a man is dying, it would rouse thee up. And what else but doubt can that man then do, that never seriously thought of heaven before?

29. Some there be that say, "It is not worth so much time and trouble to think of the greatness of the joys above; so that we can make sure they are ours, we know they are great." But as these men obey not the command of God which requires them to have their conversation in heaven, and to set their affections on things above; so they wilfully make their own lives miserable, by refusing the delights which God hath set before them. And if this were all, it were a small matter; but see what abundance of other mischiefs follow the neglect of these heavenly delights. This neglect will damp, if not destroy, their love to God; will make it unpleasant to them to think or speak of God, or engage in his service; it tends to pervert their judgments concerning the ways and ordinances of God; it makes them sensual and voluptuous; it leaves them under the power of every affliction and temptation, and is a preparative to total apostasy; it will also make them fearful and unwilling to die. For who would go to a God, or a place, he hath no delight in? Who would leave his pleasure here if he had no better to go to? Had I only proposed a course of melancholy, and fear, and sorrow, you might reasonably have objected. But you must have heavenly delights, or none that are lasting. God is willing you should daily walk with him, and fetch in consolations from the everlasting fountain; if you are unwilling, even bear the loss; and when you are dying, seek for comfort where you can get it, and see whether fleshly delights will remain with you; then conscience will remember, in spite of you, that you was once persuaded to a way for more excellent pleasures, pleasures that would have followed you through death, and have lasted to eternity.

30. As for you, whose hearts God hath weaned from all things here below, I hope you will value this heavenly life, and take one walk every day in the New Jerusalem. God is your love and your desire; you would fain be

more acquainted with your Saviour; and I know it is your grief that your hearts are not nearer to him, and that they do not more feelingly love him, and delight in him. O try this life of meditation on your heavenly rest! Here is the mount on which the fluctuating ark of your souls may rest. Let the world see by your heavenly lives that religion is something more than opinions and disputes, or a task of outward duties. If ever a Christian is like himself, and answerable to his principles and profession, it is when he is most serious and lively in this duty. As Moses, before he died, went up into mount Nebo, to take a survey of the land of Canaan; so the Christian ascends this mount of contemplation, and by faith surveys his rest. He looks upon the glorious mansions, and says, Glorious things are deservedly spoken of thee, thou city of God! He hears, as it were, the melody of the heavenly choir, and says, Happy is the people that are in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord! He looks upon the glorified inhabitants, and says, Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thine excellency! When he looks upon the Lord himself, who is their glory, he is ready with the rest to fall down and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and say, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come! Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power! When he looks on the glorified Saviour, he is ready to say, Amen, to that new song, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests! When he looks back on the wilderness of this world, he blesses the believing, patient, despised saints; he pities the ignorant, obstinate, miserable world; and for himself, he says, as Peter, It is good to be here; or as Asaph, It is good for me to draw near to God; for lo, they that are far from thee shall perish. Thus as Daniel, in his captivity, daily opened his win

dow towards Jerusalem, though far out of sight, when he went to God in his devotions; so may the believing soul, in this captivity of the flesh, look towards Jerusalem which is above: and as Paul was to the Colossians, so may the believer be with the glorified spirits, though absent in the flesh, yet with them in the spirit, joyful and beholding their heavenly order. And as the lark sweetly sings while she soars on high, but is suddenly silenced when she falls to the earth; so is the frame of the soul most delightful and divine while it keeps in the views of God by contemplation: alas, we make there too short a stay, fall down again, and lay by our music!

31. But "O thou, the merciful Father of spirits, the attractive of love, and ocean of delights, draw up these drossy hearts unto thyself, and keep them there till they are spiritualized and refined; and second thy servant's weak endeavours, and persuade those that read these lines to the practice of this delightful, heavenly work! O suffer not the soul of thy most unworthy servant to be a stranger to those joys which he describes to others; but keep me while I remain on earth in daily breathings after thee, and in a believing, affectionate walking with thee! And when thou comest let me be found so doing not serving my flesh, nor asleep with my lamp unfurnished; but waiting and longing for my Lord's return! Let those who shall read these heavenly directions, not merely read the fruit of my studies; but the breathings of my active hope and love: that, if my heart were open to their view, they might there read the same most deeply engraven with a beam from the face of the Son of God; and not find vanity, or lust, or pride, within, when the words of life appear without; that so these lines may not witness against me; but, proceeding from the heart of the writer, may be effectual, through thy grace, upon the heart of the reader, and so be the savour of life to both! Amen."

Glory be to God in the highest; on earth peace: good will towards men.

THE END.

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